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Philosophical Theology in Islam

Later Ash'arism East and West

Edited by

Ayman Shihadeh
Jan Thiele



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Contributors

Peter Adamson

is Professor of Late Ancient and Arabic Philosophy at the LMU in Munich. He is the author of two monographs on early Arabic philosophy, the book series *A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps*, and numerous articles on figures ranging from Plato and Aristotle to Averroes and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. He has also edited and co-edited numerous books, including *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (2005) and *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays* (2013).

Asad Q. Ahmed

is Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Studies and Affiliate Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *The Religious Elite of the Early Islamic Hijaz*, *Avicenna's Deliverance: Logic*, and the forthcoming *Palimpsests of Themselves: Philosophical Commentaries in Postclassical Islam*.

Fedor Benevich

is a research assistant at LMU Munich. Since 2016, he has worked in the “Heirs of Avicenna” project, funded by DFG. His research interests include metaphysics and epistemology in late antiquity and the Islamic world. Among his most recent publications are *Essentialität und Notwendigkeit: Avicenna und die Aristotelische Tradition* (Leiden: Brill 2018) and “The Reality of the Non-Existent Object of Thought: The Possible, the Impossible, and Mental Existence in Islamic Philosophy (11th–13th c.),” *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* (2018): 31–61.

Xavier Casassas Canals

University of Salzburg / UNED, is a graduate in Arabic-Islamic Studies from the University of Granada (Spain). He is a specialist in the study of the Mudejar and Moorish manuscripts of the Muslims of Aragon and Castile (15th–17th centuries). He has published the book *De Ávila a La Meca. El relato del viaje de Omar Patún 1491–1495*, (Valladolid, Ediciones Universidad de Valladolid 2017).

Jon Hoover

is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Nottingham. He is an intellectual historian focusing on the Mamluk sultanate. His publications include *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Brill 2007) and articles and book chapters on the theologies of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and Ibn al-Wazīr. He has also co-edited *The Character of Christian-Muslim Encounter* (Brill 2015).

Bilal Ibrahim

is Assistant Professor of History at Brooklyn College, City University of New York. He received his Ph.D. from McGill University. He currently focuses on the works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the reception of his ideas in later Islamic theology and philosophy. His publications include "Fakhr ad-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ibn al-Hayṭam and Aristotelian Science: Essentialism versus Phenomenalism in Post-Classical Islamic Thought", *Oriens* 41 (2013): 379–431.

Andreas Lammer

is junior professor of Arabic Philosophy, Culture, and History at Trier University in Germany. His primary research interests are in Greek and Arabic natural philosophy in both the Aristotelian and the Avicennian tradition. He is the author of *The Elements of Avicenna's Physics: Greek Sources and Arabic Innovations* (De Gruyter 2018) and is currently working on a German translation of al-Ghazālī's masterpiece *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*.

Reza Pourjavady

is Visiting Professor of Islamic History and Culture at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen. He obtained his Ph.D. degree at Freie Universität Berlin in 2008. His publications include *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran: Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd Nayrīzī and His Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) and, co-authored with Sabine Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ʿIzz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) and His Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

Harith Ramli

is a Lecturer in Theology and World Religions at Edge Hill University. His research is mainly focused on the relationship between Sufism and the intellectual disciplines of the Islamic tradition, especially in the formative period between the third/ninth and fifth/eleventh centuries. He is currently working on a monograph on the fourth/tenth-century Sufi text, the *Qūt al-qulūb*.

Ulrich Rudolph

is Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Zurich and has published extensively on Islamic philosophy and theology. His recent works include *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand* (Leiden: Brill 2015) as well as *Islamische Philosophie* (4th ed., Munich: Beck 2018), a short introduction to the topic which was translated into several languages. He is the editor of *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie (Ueberweg). Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, planned in four volumes, the first of which appeared in German (Basel: Schwabe 2012) and in English (Leiden: Brill 2017).

Meryem Sebtı

is senior researcher at CNRS, France. Her field of research is Islamic philosophy, mainly the corpus of Avicenna. She has published many papers on Avicenna's psychology and theory of knowledge. She also published *Avicenne l'âme humaine* (Paris: PUF, 2001), and in collaboration with M. Geoffroy and J. Janssens, *Avicenne. Commentaire sur le livre Lambda de la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, critical edition, translation and commentary (Paris: Vrin, 2014).

Delfina Serrano-Ruano

is PhD Tenured Researcher at the Institute for Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean and the Near East (CSIC, Madrid, Spain). Her research focuses on the relationship between Islamic jurisprudence, *kalām* and Sufism. She is the author of the chapter "Later Ash'arism in the Islamic West" in S. Schmidtke's (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (2016).

Ayman Shihadeh

(SOAS University of London) is an intellectual historian specialising in theology and philosophy in the medieval Islamic world. He completed his study at Oxford University in 2002. Among his publications are *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (2006), recently translated into Arabic and Turkish, and *Doubts on Avicenna: A Study and Edition of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī's Commentary on the Ishārāt* (2016). He currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of the *Bulletin of SOAS* and as Section Editor for Philosophy and Theology on the Editorial Board of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Brill). He is the 2019/2020 awardee of the Senior Humanities Research Fellowship at New York University Abu Dhabi.

Aaron Spevack

is the author of *The Archetypal Sunni Scholar: Law, Theology, and Mysticism in the Synthesis of al-Bajuri* (SUNY 2014). He works on Islamic Intellectual History, focusing on systematic theology (*kalām*), logic (*manṭiq*), legal methodology (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and the curricular history of various institutions of learning from the 13th century until the present. He is currently a visiting research fellow at Harvard's *SHARIAsource* in the *Islamic Legal Studies Program*, and has taught at Harvard, Colgate, and elsewhere.

Jan Thiele

is based at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) in Madrid. His research focuses on *kalām*-theology. His publications cover the field of Muʿtazilite theology, including *Theologie in der jemenitischen Zaydiyya: Die naturphilosophischen Überlegungen des al-Ḥasan ar-Raṣṣāṣ* (Leiden: Brill, 2013) and articles on Ashʿarite theology. He is also the co-editor of the journal *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*.

Introduction

Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele

Scholarly perceptions of the intellectual developments on which this volume is focused have radically shifted in the last two decades or so. According to a narrative that arose in nineteenth-century scholarship, the late fifth/eleventh century saw the rise of a Sunni theological “orthodoxy”, whose hostility to philosophy marked the beginning of a gradual decline of the rational sciences in Muslim societies.¹ Historians identified the theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) as the arch-protagonist of this orthodoxy, and grounded their claim specifically in his attack on peripatetic philosophy in his famous *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*.

The narrative of the triumph of Sunni theology over philosophy and the subsequent intellectual decline of the Muslim world continued to be dominant throughout the twentieth century. In their *Introduction à la théologie musulmane*, first published in 1948, Louis Gardet and Georges Anawati portrayed al-Ghazālī, following the historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), as the first scholar to introduce Aristotelian logic into the toolbox of *kalām*, and thereby as the founder of the “new method” (or *via moderna*), which achieved a revival of Islamic theology.² The two authors describe this new method—among whose main representatives they also counted al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 749/1348)—as “the most original line of thought of Ash‘arī *kalām*”. However, if Gardet and Anawati claimed that, as a result of these developments, Hellenistic philosophers indirectly influenced the “Muslim mentality”,³ they also concluded that the consequences of this mixing of *kalām* and philosophy were detrimental to both disciplines. They suggest that this new method culminated in the emergence of a “fossilized conservatism”, whose intellectual legacy was to produce manuals that lacked original contributions to knowledge. This period of conservatism, they claimed, constituted the longest chapter of the history of *kalām*, and echoed a general intellectual decline in the Muslim world. They summarised

1 For a discussion of this narrative see, for instance, Gutas, “The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century”.

2 Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane*, 67–72.

3 Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane*, 75.

the development as follows: “Culturally, Muslim thinking ceased to progress. *Kalām*, like all other Islamic sciences, lived on its own past”.⁴

Gardet and Anawati defended their thesis that al-Ghazālī was the initiator of the new method against the old thesis that the influence of Avicenna is already evident in the works of his teacher al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). This view was given new impetus in several recent studies, which argued that his proof for the existence of God from contingency and an aspect of his account of divine attributes exhibit Avicennan influences.⁵ Further research, however, is still needed on the nature and extent of al-Juwaynī’s engagement with philosophical sources, as this remains a decidedly under-researched area.

As for the thesis that philosophy came to an end and that theology stagnated after al-Ghazālī, this has been widely and effectively challenged in recent scholarship.⁶ There is today a near consensus that a major trait of later Ash‘arī theology was its profound engagement with philosophy, and that this engagement contributed to the continuity of (specifically Avicennan) philosophy rather than to a decline of philosophy in Muslim scholarship.⁷

An important foundation for correcting the standard twentieth-century reading of al-Ghazālī’s intellectual project was laid by Richard M. Frank, who argued in a series of studies, including two influential monographs, that rather than being its uncompromising opponent, al-Ghazālī was in fact indebted to Avicennan philosophy.⁸ This indebtedness to philosophy led Frank to the conclusion that al-Ghazālī was only nominally an Ash‘arī. Frank’s hypothesis was challenged in several articles by Michael Marmura, Ahmad Dallal, Oliver Leaman and Toby Mayer, which attempted to restore al-Ghazālī’s connection

4 Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane*, 76–78. For a critical assessment of Gardet and Anawati’s account of what they described as fossilized conservatism, see also El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 173–75.

5 Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, 161–62; Rudolph, “La preuve de l’existence de Dieu”; Wisnovsky, “One Aspect of the Avicennan Turn”. An alternative scenario was proposed by Wilferd Madelung, who argued that al-Juwaynī rather draw on a Mu‘tazilite theologian, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 426/1044), who had studied in Baghdad with (pre-Avicennan) Christian philosophers (see his “Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s Proof”). Al-Juwaynī nowhere cites Abū l-Ḥusayn in his works—unlike the later al-Rāzī, who explicitly engages with him. Abū l-Ḥusayn’s influence on al-Rāzī was discussed by Daniel Gimaret (*Théories*, 134–53, focusing on al-Rāzī’s theory of human action) and Sabine Schmidtke (*The Theology of al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī*).

6 On the historiography of Arabic philosophy see, for example, Gutas, “The Heritage of Avicenna” and *idem*, “The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century”.

7 This is indeed not a development restricted to Ash‘arī *kalām*, but it has parallels in Māturīdī and Shī‘ī *kalām*.

8 Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*; *idem*, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash‘arite School*.

to Ash'arism.⁹ However, Frank's thesis that al-Ghazālī was deeply influenced by philosophy was productively carried forward and fleshed out in several recent monographs. In their diachronic study of theories of causation in *kalām* thinking, Perler and Rudolph showed that al-Ghazālī provided Ash'arī occasionalism with a new foundation, which significantly drew on, and developed, new perspectives through his engagement with philosophical theories: unlike previous Ash'arī occasionalism, al-Ghazālī's causal theory accepted secondary causation as part of the marvellous and perfect structure of the created world established by God.¹⁰ In his 2009 study, Frank Griffel examines al-Ghazālī's cosmology highlighting its Avicennan influences.¹¹ Alexander Treiger presents further evidence for the Avicennan foundation of al-Ghazālī's thought by focusing on his epistemology: he concludes that al-Ghazālī's mystical framework and "pseudo-refutation" of philosophy served as a guise for his borrowing from philosophy.¹² Kenneth Garden focused specifically on al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* to question the traditional portrayal of him as a Sufi.¹³ The literature on al-Ghazālī has grown significantly, and his 900th anniversary in 2011 was an occasion for several edited volumes and special journal issues devoted to him.¹⁴

In his contribution to the present volume, Ulrich Rudolph reads al-Ghazālī as a precursor to later Ash'arī *kalām*. He argues that his legacy lies not in his theological doctrines, which by and large were conventional, but in some of his theoretical elements and methodological perspectives, which had a decisive impact on later theologians. The most important are his advocacy of Aristotelian logic, his uncompromising quest for certain knowledge, his penchant for sceptical arguments, and his emphasis on the purification of the soul as a necessary requirement to prepare the soul for the attainment of knowledge. In each respect, al-Ghazālī's influence cannot be underestimated, although, as Rudolph points out, much work remains to be done on the later reception of his theology.

One key exception is the recent scholarly interest in developments that theology underwent in the sixth/twelfth century, a period to which the influence

9 Marmura, "Ghazālīan Causes and Intermediaries"; Dallal, "Ghazālī and the Perils of Interpretation"; Leaman, "Ghazālī and the Ash'arites"; Mayer, "Al-Ghazali and the Ash'arite School. By Richard M. Frank [Review]".

10 Perler and Rudolph, *Occasionalismus*.

11 Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*.

12 Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*.

13 Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver*.

14 See *The Muslim World* 101.4 (2011) and 102.1 (2012) edited by M. Afifi al-Akiti; *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales* 30 (2014), edited by E. Pisani; Tamer, *Islam and Rationality*; Griffel, *Islam and Rationality*; Bülent and Griffel, *900 Jahre al-Ghazālī*.

of al-Ghazālī's style of theology, as exemplified in his most important *kalām* text the *Tahāfut*, was crucial. The gradual development of philosophical theology in this century was investigated by Ayman Shihadeh.¹⁵ He argued that despite his introduction of Aristotelian logic into Ash'arī *kalām*, al-Ghazālī reconfigured the discipline from a systematic science into what he envisaged as first and foremost a dialectical art, and at the same time reoriented its focus from Mu'tazilism towards Avicennan philosophy. In this and other ways, he contributed to the proliferation of Avicenna's works in the mainstream of Sunni scholarship. Al-Ghazālī's dialectical approach to philosophy led to the rise of a Ghazālīan current represented most prominently by Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī (d. ca. 590/1194) and Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī (d. before 600/1204), both of whom engaged critically with Avicenna.¹⁶ Their narrowly dialectical approach was subsequently criticised by their younger contemporary al-Rāzī who, having been brought up in traditional Ash'arism, reoriented *kalām* back towards systematicity while combining it with a rigorously dialectical method. In doing so, al-Rāzī completed the synthesis between *kalām* and philosophy, as is reflected in both the content and structure of his works. Several aspects of al-Rāzī's thought have been examined in detail, including his ethics and his exegetical approach to the Qur'ān.¹⁷

Considering al-Rāzī's pivotal role in the rise of philosophical theology, it is little wonder that he receives no less than five chapters in our present volume. In the first, Shihadeh examines an unpublished and apparently unique manuscript copy of a lengthy *kalām* summa attributed to him and establishes that the text dates to the first three quarters of the sixth/twelfth century and exhibits extensive influence from al-Juwaynī. He argues that it is most likely the earliest extant theological work by al-Rāzī, and hence provides further evidence that the classical Ash'arism of al-Juwaynī survived in the east well into the sixth/twelfth century largely unaffected by al-Ghazālī's new style of *kalām*, despite the latter's aforementioned impact on certain theological circles. It was in this classical tradition that al-Rāzī was brought up and educated before he became deeply engaged in the study of philosophy.

Another theological text by al-Rāzī, this time a short text evidently dating to the latter part of his career, is studied by Meryem Sebtī. Although the commentary on Q. 87 (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-A'lā*) is attributed to Avicenna in several

15 Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī".

16 Shihadeh, "A Post-Ghazālīan Critic of Avicenna"; *idem*, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Response"; *idem*, "Avicenna's Corporeal Form"; *idem*, *Doubts on Avicenna*.

17 Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*; Jaffer, *Rāzī: Master of Qur'ānic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning*.

manuscripts and two published editions, Sebtī shows that its contents in fact correspond to passages found in al-Rāzī's *al-Maṭālib al-ʿālīya*, one of the last works he wrote. In characteristic style, he divides this short Qurʾānic *sūra* into three major theological themes—namely, proving the existence of God, prophecy and eschatology.

The next three chapters tackle specific theoretical problems treated in al-Rāzī's philosophical and theological works. Peter Adamson and Andreas Lammer trace the development of his account of the essence of time, which shows how he negotiated his way dialectically through competing philosophical accounts. In his earlier works he suspends judgement on this question conceding his inability to resolve all objections facing each account. However, in the aforementioned *Maṭālib* he rejects the Aristotelian-Avicennan view that time is the magnitude of motion, endorsing instead one that he presents as Platonic, that time is self-subsistent and hence metaphysically independent of changing things.

Fedor Benevich focuses on how al-Rāzī critiques Avicenna's definition of God as the Necessary Existent to arrive at his own account. Already prior to al-Rāzī, Avicenna was interpreted as saying that God is differentiated from other existents in that he is pure existence and hence devoid of essence. This view faced the dilemma that God cannot be pure existence, because the existence of all other existents would then have the same attributes as God, and that his existence cannot differ from the existence of other existents, because he would then be composite. Benevich shows that drawing on al-Ghazālī and al-Masʿūdī, al-Rāzī solves this dilemma by arguing that God does have an essence, which is distinct from his necessary existence and prior to it.

The last contribution on al-Rāzī too deals with essence, this time in created things. Bilal Ibrahim examines al-Rāzī's concept of the causing of essence (*jaʿl al-māhiyya*) and its later reception in *kalām* and philosophical Sufism, paying close attention to its theological, philosophical and exegetical significance. He shows how this concept serves as a new rubric for tackling various philosophical questions concerning essence, existence and the causation of simple and composite things.

Al-Rāzī's approach to *kalām* profoundly changed the intellectual landscape of later Ashʿarism. Recent studies by Tony Street, Khaled El-Rouayheb and Ibrahim discuss the impact of al-Rāzī on later Arabic logic.¹⁸ Heidrun Eichner analysed in detail how the systematic exposition of Ashʿarī doctrines was

18 Street, "Faḥraddīn ar-Rāzī's Critique of Avicennan Logic"; El-Rouayheb, *Relational Syllogisms*, 39–69; *idem*, "Theology and Logic", 411–16; Ibrahim, "Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, Ibn al-Hayṭam and Aristotelian Science".

gradually integrated into the theoretical framework of Avicennan philosophy.¹⁹ Well before the recent rise of interest in later Ash'arism, Josef van Ess studied the epistemological part of 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī's (d. 756/1355–56) *Mawāqif*.²⁰ Reza Pourjavady's chapter in the present volume sheds vital new light on al-Ījī's larger oeuvre and students, and as such on the state of Ash'arism in eighth/fourteenth-century Ilkhānid lands. With Edwin E. Calverley and James W. Pollock's translation of al-Bayḍāwī's (d. between 699/1299–705/1306) *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*, together with Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī's commentary on this work, a major compendium of post-Rāzian Ash'arī *kalām* was made available in the English language.

While studies on the history of later Ash'arism have focused primarily on the Islamic east, developments in other regions of the Islamic world have lately started to receive more attention. Important recent contributions on later Ash'arism in the Islamic west include Yamina Adouhane's work on a sixth/twelfth-century refutation of Avicennan philosophy by Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Miklātī (d. 626/1229), Joseph P. Kenny's analysis of the creed *al-'Aqida al-wuṣṭā* by the highly influential Muḥammad al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490), and El-Rouayheb's work on developments in eleventh/seventeenth-century Ash'arism in the Maghrib and Egypt.²¹

The introduction of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* in al-Andalus provoked fierce scholarly opposition, which culminated in the eventual burnings of his books during the first decades of the sixth/twelfth century. Xavier Casassas's and Delfina Serrano's contribution to this volume focuses on two Andalusī scholars—the first, Averroes's grandfather Ibn Rushd al-Jadd (d. 520/1126), who experienced the first auto-da-fé, and the second Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273), who wrote a century or so after these events—and they ask specifically what these authors can tell us about the controversy over al-Ghazālī. In their chapter, they argue that debates over al-Ghazālī in al-Andalus were more complex and sophisticated than often depicted, and they show that despite their critical stance towards al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd al-Jadd and al-Qurṭubī

19 Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy" (Habilitation Thesis, Martin-Luther-Universität, 2009); *idem*, "Handbooks in the Tradition of Later Eastern Ash'arism".

20 van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*.

21 Respectively, Adouhane, "Al-Miklātī, a Twelfth Century Aṣ'arite Reader of Averroes"; *idem*, "Une critique aṣ'arite post-ruṣḍienne de la cosmologie d'Avicenne: Traduction et commentaire de la *Quintessence des Intellects* d'Abū al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ al-Miklātī (m.1229)" (Ph.D. Thesis, École Normale Supérieure, 2015); Kenny, "Muslim Theology as presented by M. b. Yūsuf as-Sanūsī" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1970); El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 131–231.

blamed some of their peers for criticising al-Ghazālī on weak scholarly principles.

The second contribution on the Islamic west, by Jan Thiele, examines the state of Ashʿarī scholarship in Ifrīqiya between the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries. He studies intellectual influences in the works of several theologians from this era, including the continuous Juwaynian impact, the rising engagement with Aristotelian logic, and the early reception of al-Rāzī's works in the Maghrib.

There is also growing interest in the history of Ashʿarism in central lands, including during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods.²² Laura Hassan has focused on the Syrian Ashʿarī Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī's (d. 631/1233) views on creation.²³ Bringing early-eighth/fourteenth-century Mamlūk Ashʿarism into sharper focus, Jon Hoover's chapter in the present volume examines the responses of four theologians to Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 728/1328) criticism of Ashʿarī theological hermeneutics. All four maintain that one must either delegate the interpretation of scriptural anthropomorphisms to God (*tafwīd*) or interpret them figuratively (*taʾwīl*), this choice being a feature of later Ashʿarism. The history of the school in Egypt has also been the focus of recent studies by Aaron Spevack.²⁴ These are complemented by his chapter in the present volume, which adduces evidence of robust and innovative continued conversations over philosophical and theological questions to argue that Ashʿarism continued to be an intellectually vibrant theological tradition well into the early-modern period.

Harith Ramli's chapter in the present volume explores aspects of the relation between Ashʿarī *kalām* and Sufism in the Ottoman period, particularly in the writings of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1091/1690). Focusing on the structure of the latter's study record (*thabt*) titled *al-Amam li-īqāz al-himam* and the intellectual genealogies set out therein, Ramli sheds light on how al-Kūrānī reshaped the Ashʿarī tradition to promote the Sufism of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240).

Our knowledge of the later history of the school in the Indian subcontinent likewise remains in its infancy.²⁵ Asad Q. Ahmed's paper in this volume explores the reception of the aforementioned *Mawāqif* of ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī in South

22 Badeen, *Sunnitische Theologie in osmanischer Zeit*; Berger, "Interpretations of Ashʿarism and Māturīdism".

23 Hassan, *Ashʿarism Encounters Avicennism*.

24 Spevack, "Apples and Oranges"; *idem*, *The Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*; *idem*, "Egypt and the Later Ashʿarite School".

25 For a recent sketch, see Ahmed, and Pourjavady, "Theology in the Indian Subcontinent". On the reception of al-Sanūsī in Southeast Asia, see furthermore Bruckmayr, "The *ṣarḥ*/*ḥāshiya* Phenomenon in Southeast Asia".

Asia from the second half of the tenth/sixteenth century on, examining the scholarly networks within which this text was engaged through commentaries.

The thirteen chapters comprising this volume, the outcome of a similarly-titled conference held at SOAS on 2–3 September 2014, push the frontiers of the field in several directions and amply illustrate the richness of this area of research. The editors are grateful for support provided by the John Templeton Foundation and KRM, the EU's Marie Curie Actions (GA no. 624808), the Spanish government's Ramón y Cajal programme (RYC-2015-18346), and the Humanities Research Fellowship for the Study of the Arab World programme at New York University Abu Dhabi.

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Post-Ghazālian Theology

What were the Lessons to be Learned from al-Ghazālī?

Ulrich Rudolph

1 Introduction

Al-Ghazālī is generally recognised as one of the key figures in the history of *kalām*. Numerous medieval authors praised him for having renewed Muslim faith, mainly by introducing Aristotelian logic into theological speculation,¹ and modern scholars almost unanimously agree with this appraisal, both in the Islamic world and the West.² His position in the history of *kalām* and his devotion to *kalām* thus appear evident. Yet al-Ghazālī would not be al-Ghazālī if things were so straightforward. If there is anything which we have learnt for sure about him during more than 100 years of intensive research, it is that his reflections and his positions were never simple and one-dimensional but always multifarious and complex.

This does not apply only to philosophy, which has been at the centre of academic discussions on al-Ghazālī during the last decades.³ *Mutatis mutandis*, it also applies to dialectical theology. There are in any case two important

- 1 Among the testimonies stressing al-Ghazālī's impact on the development of *kalām*, Ibn Khaldūn's (d. 808/1406) remarks were probably the most influential. He characterizes al-Ghazālī as a kind of watershed between early Muslim theology and later developments. According to him, the main innovation of later *kalām* was the study and use of (Aristotelian) logic, al-Ghazālī being "the first (scholar) to write in accordance with the (new) theological approach" (Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 3:31 / Engl. transl., 3:52; cf. *al-Muqaddima*, 3:113–16 / Engl. transl., 3:143–46).
- 2 The *locus classicus* in modern secondary literature is Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 67–72 where al-Ghazālī is described as the scholar who implemented the *via moderna* (i.e. the use of logic) in Islamic theology. Gardet and Anawati's book *Introduction à la théologie musulmane* which appeared first in 1948 and was republished in 1970 and 1981 has had a considerable impact on modern scholarship for several decades.—Comparable characterizations of al-Ghazālī can be found in publications from the Islamic world. A recent and most interesting example is Arfa, "Mulāḥazāt", 68–71.
- 3 The fact that research on al-Ghazālī has focussed on his philosophical interests since the 1980s is manifest and has been confirmed by several conferences held in 2011 on the occasion of his anniversary. The results of two of these conferences have meanwhile been published in the volumes entitled *Islam and Rationality* (2015 and 2016) which can be considered as presenting the current state of the art in Ghazālīan studies. Cf. also 900 *Jahre al-Ġazālī im Spiegel der islamischen Wissenschaften* (2015) and the special issues published on the occasion of al-Ghazālī's anniversary in *MIDEO* 30 (2014): 1–184 and *The Muslim World* 101 (2011): 573–713; 102 (2012): 1–209.

indications that, despite his renown as an outstanding *mutakallim*, he had serious reservations about the scientific field which he represented. One of them is the way he wrote his *kalām* books and treatises. On closer inspection, none of them is an outstanding let alone a revolutionary work. They rather present well-known theological topics in more or less conventional terms. This is true even for his most important book in the field, the famous *al-Iqtīṣād fī l-i'tiqād* that is *The Balanced Book on What-to-Believe*.⁴ It is admittedly a well-organized work which is more systematic and, at the same time, more persuasive and pedagogical than many other books written on the same topic.⁵ Nevertheless, it can hardly be considered a cavalcade of new thoughts and unprecedented arguments which would justify calling its author a key figure in the history of Islamic theology and a renewer of Muslim faith.⁶

The second indication consists of the way al-Ghazālī talked about *kalām*. His comments were anything but enthusiastic. This is not to dismiss the fact that he occasionally uttered some affirmative remarks on dialectical theology, as has been highlighted by the late Michael Marmura,⁷ but all in all al-Ghazālī's attitude towards *kalām* was critical to say the least. This can be detected in many of his writings. The best known example is probably the description of *kalām* in his autobiographical *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (*The Deliverer from Error*).⁸ But there are other comments on the same topic which are more illuminating, among them a revealing passage in *The Book of Knowledge* (*Kitāb al-'Ilm*), i.e. the first book of his famous *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (*The Revival of the Sciences of Religion*).⁹

According to this passage, *kalām* was originally not part of the religious sciences. The pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) living in the first century of Islam even avoided delving into theological debates and speculations because they considered them to be a source of quarrelling and heresy. Later on, however,

4 The text edited by Çubukçu and Atay already in 1962 has not been studied thoroughly so far. Cf., however, the structural analysis of the book given by Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 157–60, and the interesting remarks on several aspects of its content by Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School*, 28–68, Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, pages as indicated in the index (p. 403), and Shihadeh, "Al-Ghazālī and Kalām", 114–37.

5 An interesting example is the argument for God's existence as it is presented in the *Iqtīṣād*. Even in modern discussions it has been credited to be persuasive and convincing; cf. Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, and the discussion initiated by this book. For a short presentation of al-Ghazālī's argument see my "La preuve de l'existence de Dieu", 344–46.

6 Cf. the sceptical remarks by Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī", 145–48, and *idem*, "Al-Ghazālī and Kalām", 113.

7 Marmura, "Ghazālī and Ash'arism Revisited", 94–101.

8 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 16–17.

9 al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 1 22.4–24.14 / French transl. 74–80.

the situation changed. Some Muslims deviated from revealed truth and began to invent dubious teachings. As a consequence, true faith had to be defended by dialectical arguments and so “Something perilous became by sheer necessity permitted”,¹⁰ which means that the science of *kalām* emerged.

Since then, theologians have tried to defend the dogma which every righteous Muslim should believe (*‘aqīda*). By doing so, they can be compared to the armed guards that protect the pilgrims’ caravan on its way to Mecca, the only difference being that theologians do not fight against Bedouin marauders but against stubborn heretics.¹¹ However, true cognition of God’s essence, His attributes and His acts is still outside the realm of *kalām*. Whoever is searching for this has to address another science, namely “the science of disclosure” (*‘ilm al-mukāshafa*). *Kalām* is not in the position to provide us with any kind of religious knowledge or, to put it in al-Ghazālī’s own words: “The cognition of God, His attributes and His acts ... does not result from the science of *kalām*; (one could) rather say that *kalām* is a veil and an obstacle to it.”¹²

In view of this passage, it can be excluded that *kalām* as such played a major role in al-Ghazālī’s intellectual positioning. Whatever he was aiming at in propagating a new orientation of Islamic thought and theological reflection, it cannot have been a simple reform of *kalām* but must have included elements and strategies which were conceived from a wider theoretical perspective. In the following, I will discuss some of these issues. This is admittedly a delicate task given the vast number of ideas and reflections which, in principle, deserve mention in such a context. The best way of proceeding is thus to restrict the discussion to a few aspects, all of which will be situated on an intermediate level, as it were. By this I mean that I will neither talk about the details of the Ghazālīan project such as the question of if and to what extent he quoted previous authors and, in particular, Avicenna in his own writings,¹³ nor will I try to draw out an overall perspective on his thought by reconstructing a kind of “system” of al-Ghazālī, a task still to be undertaken, as Toby Mayer rightly pointed out in a review article published few years ago.¹⁴ All I want to do is to

10 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 1:22.11 (*fa-šāra dhālika l-maḥdhūru bi-ḥukmi l-ḍarūrati ma’dhūnan fīhi*) / French transl. 75.

11 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 1:22.34–23.3 / French transl. 76; cf. 40.18–20 (referring to the *salaf ṣāliḥ*), French transl. 120.

12 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 1:23.2–4 (*fa-lā yaḥṣulu min ‘ilm al-kalām bal yakādu an yakūna l-kalāmu ḥijāban ‘alayhi wa-māni’an anhu*) / French transl. 76–77.

13 This approach has been masterly advanced by Jules Janssens in a series of articles published since the 1980s. Most of them are included in the volume *Ibn Sīnā and His Influence* which appeared in 2006; for a recent example cf. Janssens, “Éléments avicenniens”.

14 Mayer, Review, 115 and 128.

reconsider some theoretical elements which seem to have been of particular importance for al-Ghazālī. None of them is new in the sense that it has not yet been subject to scholarly debates. But I will try to settle them in a new perspective, thereby building a bridge to the Islamic authors who followed him. Many were deeply influenced by al-Ghazālī, as is well-known, but one may question whether this influence was actually due to his theological doctrine. I will argue that it was not his overall doctrine which had a deep impact on later generations of theologians but rather some theoretical elements and methodological perspectives of his which were particularly suitable for facing the intellectual challenges of the time. For the sake of clarity, my presentation will be divided into four parts.

2 Striving for Scientific Recognition or: the Importance of Logic

The focus here is on a topic which has already been the subject matter of several scholarly articles, that is al-Ghazālī's well-known interest in logic. Most of the scholars dealing with this issue have come to the conclusion that al-Ghazālī's relationship to logic was ambiguous if not paradoxical. On the one hand, he insisted on the importance of logical studies. He was convinced that everybody working in a scientific field had to learn the methods of proof and the conditions of demonstration. Consequently, he wrote a whole series of books during his lifetime meant to explain the basic elements of Aristotelian logic to his colleagues in theology and jurisprudence, culminating in *The Standard of Knowledge* (*Mi'yār al-'ilm*) and *The Touchstone for Speculation* (*Mihakk al-naẓar*) and ending with the introduction to *The Distillation of the Science of the Principles* (*al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl*) which was completed two years before his death.¹⁵

On the other hand, al-Ghazālī hardly made any use of Aristotelian logic in his own writings. Even in his books on *kalām* topics, it is difficult to find any relevant passage or any substantial train of thought in which the rules of demonstrative logic are consistently applied. In the *Iqtisād*, for instance, he tells us in the beginning that there are essentially three methods of proving propositions. One of them is the method known as *investigation and disjunction* (*al-sabr wa-l-taqsīm*), the second is the Aristotelian syllogism, the third one the *reductio ad absurdum* or the *argumentum ad hominem*, in Arabic called

15 Bernand, "Al-Ghazālī, artisan de la fusion", 225–29; Rudolph, "Die Neubewertung", 84–88; Janssens, "Al-Ghazālī: The Introduction".

ilzām.¹⁶ Throughout the book, however, none of them is given preference in al-Ghazālī's presentation. So, it appears to be more or less arbitrary whether such important doctrines as "God exists from eternity" or "the world has been created in time" are substantiated by a categorical syllogism or in another way.¹⁷

Facing this problem, Tony Street wrote in an article published ten years ago: "Ġazālī was a promoter of logic, not a practitioner."¹⁸ One year later, this observation was confirmed by Ayman Shihadeh who concluded his remarks on this topic by saying: "... al-Ghazālī's introduction of logic to *kalām* is by no means consistent or definitive, but pragmatic."¹⁹ Both these affirmations stress an important point: The concepts and rules provided by Aristotelian logic were not an intrinsic condition of al-Ghazālī's reflections. His arguments *can* be expressed in a syllogistic form. But they are not based on deductive reasoning, revealing its premisses and explaining step by step the conclusions to be drawn from them. If this is the case, however, one cannot help asking for the motifs behind al-Ghazālī's pragmatism. Why after all did he insist on the importance of logic? And why did he urge his colleagues and his fellow theologians to study its rules and its methods, considering that, in the end, theologians can manage to present their doctrines and propositions without making use of it?

The question is complex, but in order to answer it, it may be useful to consider two aspects. The first one is related to the general problem of defining and identifying scientific writing. By that, I mean: What makes a book a scientific book? What are the conditions to be met and the criteria to be fulfilled in order that a treatise or an article is acknowledged by the scientific community as a scientific text? As a first approach, we would perhaps tend to say: It must contain systematic arguments and reflections. This is, at any rate, the answer given by Paul Hoyningen-Huene in a book on the topic published in 2013. There he argues that "the essential difference between scientific and other forms of knowledge consists of the higher degree of systematicity of the former."²⁰ That said, the question remains what kinds of arguments and what sorts of methods are to be recognised as systematic ones. Obviously, this is the crucial point, the answer depending on several conditions such as the historical environment, intellectual traditions and the conventions agreed upon in the scientific community.

16 Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtīṣād*, 15.8–17.15; Rudolph, "Die Neubewertung", 88–90; Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī", 145–46.

17 Rudolph, "Die Neubewertung", 91 n. 66 and 67.

18 Street, "Arabic Logic", 559.

19 Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī", 148.

20 Hoyningen-Huene, *Systematicity*, ix.

Nowadays, we are used to a situation of permanent change in methodological and theoretical perspectives, at least in the Humanities. To give you only one example which is admittedly rather simplified and solely coined from the French perspective: In the 1980s, scholars in the Humanities were expected to formulate their reflections mainly in terms and concepts developed by Michel Foucault; some years later, it was more appropriate to refer to Jacques Derrida; and again some years later, references should best be made to Pierre Bourdieu. As a result, during the last three or four decades, hundreds of books have been printed, the authors of which declare in the introduction to have been deeply inspired by the concepts of Foucault, Derrida or Bourdieu. But this does not necessarily mean that the alleged inspiration has really marked the contents of their books. Are we tempted so to think of al-Ghazālī and his *Iqtīṣād*?

Aristotelian logic was the scientific method to be followed at his time. This was due to the general prevalence of the Aristotelian paradigm which was, of course, much more dominant than the ideas of Foucault, Derrida and Bourdieu have ever been. But it was also due to the tireless efforts of al-Fārābī and Avicenna. Both of them argued that the *Organon* was a comprehensive examination of human rationality, describing the whole range of ways to speculate and to give reasons for speculations, and both considered demonstration as described in the *Second Analytics* to be the only way of reasoning which can provide us with scientific knowledge. As a result, the *Organon* and, in particular, demonstrative syllogistics became the widely accepted standard of knowledge. Whoever wanted to be recognised, not only in his particular field but also in the wider context of the scientific community, was expected to apply Aristotelian logic or, at least, to know what it was. This may have been one of the pragmatic reasons why al-Ghazālī devoted himself to logical studies and why he admonished his colleagues in theology to do the same.²¹

There is, however, a second aspect which should not be neglected in this context. In a certain way, it underlines the eminent position attributed to logic by al-Ghazālī. But at the same time it modifies and stretches the perspective in which he viewed it. While promoting the knowledge of logic, al-Ghazālī insisted on the fact that it was not a privilege of some philosophers. They were admittedly the best experts in the field but, according to him, they had neither invented syllogistic reasoning nor were they the only persons to practise it.

In al-Ghazālī's view, this can be demonstrated on three levels. First: The methods of proof applied in theology and law, such as the aforementioned *investigation and disjunction* (*al-sabr wa-l-taqṣīm*) and the *qiyās*, may at first sight be different from the syllogistic arguments of the philosophers. On closer

21 Street, "Arabic Logic", 556–59.

examination, however, it turns out that they are nothing but variations of the same logical structure. Consequently, all kinds of arguments can be converted into syllogistic form.²² This was, by the way, a conviction al-Ghazālī shared with al-Fārābī, who had already promoted this point in his *Short Treatise on Reasoning in the Way of the Theologians* (*al-Mukhtaṣar al-ṣaḡhīr fī l-mantiq ‘alā ṭarīqat al-mutakallimīn*).²³

Second: According to al-Ghazālī, syllogistic reasoning cannot be reduced to its specific application in the field of sciences. In its basic elements, it is rather the common way used by all human beings when they speculate and try to discover new insights. This is one of the central topics in book 39 of the *Iḥyā’*, that is *The Book about Thinking* (*Kitāb al-Tafakkur*). It starts with the programmatic statement: “The meaning of ‘thinking’ (*ma’nā al-fikr*) is to bring two pieces of knowledge into the heart (of a human being) in order to conclude from them a third piece of knowledge.”²⁴ Afterwards, this definition is illustrated by a syllogism and repeated in several variations, all of them stressing its evidential and universal validity.

Third: Still according to al-Ghazālī, even God makes use of syllogistic reasoning, at least, when He communicates with mankind. This is explained in another of his books, entitled *The Just Balance* (*al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*). One of its goals is to show that the Qur’ān contains all principal forms and figures of Aristotelian syllogistic. In order to demonstrate this assumption, al-Ghazālī quotes a long series of Qur’ānic verses explaining in every case the type of syllogism to be detected therein.²⁵

I must confess that the explanations given in *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm* are not really convincing but appear more or less haphazard. Therefore, it is not particularly astonishing that al-Ghazālī himself declares towards the end of this work to have deliberately chosen simple arguments in order to convince the simple-minded Ismā’īlī readers to whom the book was addressed.²⁶ However, what he intended when writing the *Qisṭās* is very clear. His message was, in short: Muslims are allowed to apply syllogistic reasoning. Indeed, they are called upon to apply syllogistic reasoning because God Himself has implemented this faculty in the heart of human beings and has taught us how to make use of it.

22 Rudolph, “Die Neubewertung”, 77–79 and 89–90.

23 Rudolph, “Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī”, 557–58 and 607–8.

24 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 4:425,26 (*‘ilam anna ma’nā l-fikr huwa iḥḍār ma’rifatayn fī l-qalb li-yustathmara minhumā ma’rifā thālitha*) / French transl. 37.

25 al-Ghazālī, *al-Qisṭās*, 41 pp.; cf. Kleinknecht, “Al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm”; Rudolph, “Die Neubewertung”, 86–88.

26 al-Ghazālī, *al-Qisṭās* 72.6–8.

Seen in this light, al-Ghazālī's promotion of logic was not accidental but carefully considered. It may have been limited on theoretical grounds but on the pragmatic level it was effective and served several goals. Apart from that, it had another consequence which we have not taken into account so far. It is no longer part of our first discussion but brings us to the second point which may be called:

3 The Critical Potential of Logic or: the Extension of Sceptical Reasoning

Here, I deal with another element in al-Ghazālī's teaching which has already been discussed by several scholars, usually under the label of "scepticism". The various results achieved so far have recently been summarized and commented on by Taneli Kukkonen in an article entitled "Al-Ghazālī's Scepticism Revisited". It focuses on two issues which have dominated the scholarly debate in this field. One of them is al-Ghazālī's quest for certain knowledge, viz. his sceptical doubts against the possibility of achieving certain knowledge; they are most prominently expressed in the *Munqidh* and have often been paralleled with some passages in Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode* and his *Meditationes de prima philosophia*.²⁷ The second issue is al-Ghazālī's argument against causality or rather against the knowability of causal relations. According to this argument, all we can observe in this world are things happening in conjunction with (*inda*) or after (*ba'da*) one another, never because of (*bi*) one another. This argument is to be found in the *Tahāfut* and has been compared to reflections by various European philosophers, among them most prominently David Hume.²⁸

Both these issues are of paramount interest. One might even say that they have established al-Ghazālī's fame among historians of philosophy. Therefore, Kukkonen is perfectly right to focus his examination on these points. As he adds himself, however, there are further aspects deserving discussion in this context. These confirm al-Ghazālī's noteworthy tendency to scepticism. I would even argue that they constitute a general trend of his teaching, namely to make use of concepts and methods developed in Aristotelian logic in order to criticize established philosophical doctrines.

27 Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazālī's Scepticism Revisited", 29 and 54–55; cf. now Rudolph, "Auf der Suche nach Erkenntnis", 4–11 and 15–22.

28 Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazālī's Scepticism Revisited", 29, 42–43 and 54.

It is impossible to explain all the relevant details in this context. All I can offer you now are two examples meant to illustrate the general point. One of these is al-Ghazālī's permanent interest in examining the form of arguments. Having studied the different forms and types of Aristotelian syllogisms, he regularly tries to show that the philosophers did not always apply them in the correct way. Such is the case, for instance, with an argument attributed to Galen and meant to demonstrate the post-eternity of the world, as al-Ghazālī tells us. Consequently, he first describes Galen's argument, then explains its form, which is in this case a (hypothetical) conjunctive conditional syllogism, and finally demonstrates that Galen's argument does not meet the conditions which have been fixed for this particular type of syllogism.²⁹

All in all, however, formal errors were not at the centre of al-Ghazālī's critique of the philosophers. As a rule, philosophers knew how to build syllogisms as did, by the way, representatives of other sciences and as he himself wanted his colleagues in Islamic theology to do. The real subject of contention was not the form of the syllogism but its content. In other words, al-Ghazālī objected to the premisses posited by the philosophers. In fact, he criticized the way they formed concepts and propositions to be used in their premisses. This is my second example of his critical approach to philosophy, and it is by far the more important one.

In order to follow it, we first have to recall to mind that al-Ghazālī considered several types of premisses as valid. He discussed this topic in various writings, for instance in the *Mihakk al-naẓar* and in the introductory parts of the *Mustaṣfā*. According to the presentations given in these two books, the list of valid premisses consists of six classes: (1) primary evidences (*awwaliyyāt*) such as the law of contradiction; (2) internal self-perceptions (*mushāhadāt bāṭina*) such as "I feel hungry"; (3) external sense perceptions (*maḥsūsāt ḡāhira*) such as "Salt is white"; (4) experiences (*taḡribiyyāt*) such as "Fire is burning"; (5) reliable traditions (*mutawātirāt*) such as "Mecca exists" and (6) imaginations (*wahmiyyāt*) such as "A body has six sides" meaning that it has three dimensions.³⁰

In principle, this enumeration is not surprising, particularly, since it mainly repeats the classes of premisses which had already been discussed and accepted by the philosophers. In practice, however, the list seems to have been a starting point of al-Ghazālī's critique of the philosophers. As far as I can see, this is neither explicitly discussed nor systematically explained in his writings. Yet, the way he criticized the doctrines of the philosophers in the *Tahāfut*

29 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 48.14–49.5.

30 al-Ghazālī, *Mihakk*, 102–8; *idem*, *al-Mustaṣfā*, 57–62.

suggests that we are right to interpret his understanding of the premisses in this sense.

This becomes evident when we turn to metaphysics. As is well-known, this topic was at the centre of the al-Ghazālī's quarrelling with the philosophers. In the *Munqidh*, for instance, he tells us: "It is in the *metaphysical sciences* that most of the philosophers' errors are found. Owing to the fact that they could not carry out apodeictic demonstration according to the conditions they had postulated in logic, they differed a great deal about metaphysical questions."³¹ At this point, we may add now: The main problem of the philosophers which prevented them from carrying out apodeictic demonstration can be identified. It was the lack of true premisses. For however long the aforementioned list of acceptable premisses may have been, it was no longer valid nor pertinent when metaphysics was at stake.

This applies in particular to numbers one to four of the list, that is the primary evidences, the internal self-perceptions, the external sense perceptions and the experiences. For several reasons which cannot be explained in detail in this context, none of them can serve as the basis of metaphysical thought, at least in al-Ghazālī's opinion. Number five, that is the reliable traditions, would have been his own favourite. Yet, unfortunately, the philosophers did not accept religious traditions as the starting-point of their metaphysical speculations. What remains thus, is number six, that is the imaginations (*wahmiyyāt*). Not, of course, in the view of the philosophers, because no philosopher would have agreed that his metaphysics is based on mere imaginations, even if these imaginations may be sound, as is the case with the example "A body has six sides" given above. But this is exactly the objection raised by al-Ghazālī against them.

In order to back up this assertion, I will give you a few examples. All of them are taken from the *Tahāfut* which is abundant in arguments going in this direction. In chapter 6, for instance, which is devoted to the problem of the divine attributes, al-Ghazālī characterizes the position of the philosophers as follows: "All their approaches in this problem are [things] that induce [mere] imaginings (*takhylāt*)."³² In chapter 15, entitled "On refuting what they mentioned concerning the purpose that moves heaven", he explains:

[All this] indicates that these are imaginings that achieve nothing, and that the secrets of the heavenly kingdom are not known with the likes of these imaginings (*khayālāt*). God makes them known only to his

31 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 23.14–15 / Engl. transl. 76 (quoted here).

32 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 101.8 (the transl. quoted is Marmura's).

prophets and saints by way of inspiration, not by way of inferential proof. For this reason, the philosophers to their last have been unable to show the reason for the direction of the [celestial] motion and for its choice.³³

In chapter 1, that is the discussion of the world's past eternity, the philosophers refuse to accept God's will as the ultimate cause of temporal creation. In this context, they are on record to have said:

It is inconceivable of us (*lā yutaṣawwar minnā*) that we would differentiate through will one thing from its similar. Indeed, if in front of a thirsty person there are two glasses of water that are similar in every respect in relation to his purpose [of wanting to drink], it would be impossible for him to take either. Rather, he would take that which would deem him better, lighter, closer to his right side—if his habit was to move the right hand—or some such cause, whether hidden or manifest. Otherwise, differentiating something from its like is in no circumstance conceivable (*lā yutaṣawwar ... bi-ḥāl*).³⁴

A few pages later in the same chapter, the philosophers argue that it is impossible to conceive of the temporal creation of the world without imagining that time as such has always existed being the medium of God's relations to his creatures. Against this al-Ghazālī raises the objection: "... the supposition of a third thing is not necessary, even though the estimative faculty (*al-wahm*) does not refrain from supposing a third thing. But one must not heed the errors of estimative thoughts (*aghālīṭ al-awḥām*)."³⁵

It must be admitted that the examples just given cannot all be situated on the same level. Al-Ghazālī's critique is not restricted to simply affirming that the philosophers based their speculations on imaginings. He is well aware of the fact that the problem has several facets: the powers of imagination can be defective; the estimative faculty can lead us astray; it is difficult to transfer the judgements of estimation and imagination to judgements of intellect, let alone to valid rational concepts;³⁶ and finally, there was still the question what for God's sake all these dubious mental operations had to do with metaphysics.

To be sure: All the examples just given and all the aspects just mentioned need to be studied more carefully. Up to now, we can only say that al-Ghazālī's

33 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 151.21–152.3.

34 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 22.19–23.3.

35 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 31.19–20.

36 Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal*, 50.12–51.1, where the confusion between the judgements of imagination and those of intellect is listed as one of five basic sources of error.

interest in sceptical thought and in critical arguments against philosophical dogmatism went beyond the small number of examples usually cited in this context. Whether it was, in the end, sufficiently consistent and elaborate so as to call him a precursor of critical philosophy—what Julian Obermann suggested in a book published nearly hundred years ago—still has to be examined.³⁷ But regardless of the question whether such a label would be appropriate or rather misleading in his case, we can conclude that his reflections in this field were an important element of his teaching and certainly deserve further investigation.³⁸

Yet, however strong al-Ghazālī's commitment to criticism may have been, it was not an end in itself in his opinion. This brings us to our third point, which has already been mentioned briefly before and may be entitled as:

4 To Overcome Scepticism or: the Quest for Certain Knowledge

The scenario to be discussed in this context needs no particular introduction. It is the famous passage in the *Munqidh* where al-Ghazālī describes in eloquent terms that, at a certain period in his life, he experienced fundamental doubts about the possibility of attaining knowledge. As he explains, he first became aware of the fact that sense perception cannot provide us with certain knowledge (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*). Then he discovered that even rational data belonging to the category of primary evidences such as “Ten is more than three” can sometimes be subject to doubt and error. As a result, he fell into a sceptical crisis, which he experienced as a kind of malady lasting for nearly two months. But, in the end,

My soul regained its health and equilibrium and once again I accepted the self-evident data of reason and relied on them with safety and certainty. But that was not achieved by constructing a proof or putting together an argument. On the contrary, it was the effect of a light which God Most High cast into my breast. And that light is the key to most knowledge.³⁹

37 Obermann, *Der philosophische und religiöse Subjektivismus*, 83–85.

38 A careful study has to take into account that al-Ghazālī was not the first Islamic scholar to accuse the philosophers of confusing the judgements of imagination with those of intellect. The accusation was already articulated by earlier theologians; cf. e.g. al-Māturīdī, *Tawhīd*, 51–56, who presents it in the same context as al-Ghazālī, that is when refuting the philosophers' doctrine of the world's past eternity.

39 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh* 13.22–14.1 / Engl. transl. 66.

Al-Ghazālī's account is extremely powerful and has already been the object of many interpretations.⁴⁰ As these have pointed out, the text can be read in several ways—as an example of autobiographical literature, as a piece of literary self-representation, as a guideline for intellectual education or as a philosophical discourse. Moreover, the *Munqidh* seems to be a fruitful object for studies on intertextuality, as it obviously shares many motifs and themes with texts written by other Islamic authors, among them al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857),⁴¹ (Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan) Ibn al-Haytham (fl. 390/1000)⁴² and al-Ghazālī's elder contemporary 'Umar Khayyām (d. probably 517/1123–24).⁴³ In our context, however, we have to confine ourselves to examining just one particular point. This is the fact that it is at the very end of al-Ghazālī's story that God's light is presented as the solution of all epistemological problems. It is the focal point of the whole narrative. Thus, we have to ask what al-Ghazālī meant when

40 Cf., recently Rudolph, "Auf der Suche nach Erkenntnis", 4–11.

41 Van Ess, "Quelques remarques", 64–65.

42 The parallels to Ibn al-Haytham's autobiography are striking insofar as both authors describe their own intellectual development as a long road leading from doubt (*shakk*) to certainty (*yaqīn*). The relevant passages in Ibn al-Haytham's autobiography are to be found in Heinen, "Ibn al-Haiṭams Autobiographie", 258–59 and 269 (Arabic text), and Wiedemann, "Ibn al-Haiṭam", 156–58 [124–26] and 168–69 [136–37] (German transl.). Both, Heinen and Wiedemann, as well as several other modern scholars have ascribed this autobiography to the well-known mathematician and physicist (al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan) Ibn al-Haytham who lived in Egypt and died about 431/1040. However, there are good reasons to attribute it to another person named (Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan) Ibn al-Haytham who was a physician and a philosopher flourishing at the same time in Baghdad. The relevant evidence is discussed by Thomann, "The Second Revival of Astronomy", 931–32.—Regardless to this problem of authentication, Ibn al-Haytham and al-Ghazālī are only two examples in a long list of scholars who presented themselves as searching for certainty that is a reliable basis (the *fundamentum inconcussum*) for all kinds of knowledge. This tradition of literary self-representation stretched from late Antiquity (Galen) to early modern Europe (Descartes), as Menn, "The *Discourse on Method* and the Tradition of Intellectual Autobiography" has convincingly argued (cf. also Garden, "Coming Down from the Mountaintop"). In fact, it only came to an end in the 19th century when philosophers gave up their quest for the *fundamentum inconcussum*, and Nietzsche wrote (in a remark on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*) sentences such as "Nicht der Zweifel, die Gewissheit ist das, was wahnsinnig macht ... Aber dann muss man tief, Abgrund, Philosoph sein, um so zu fühlen ..." (*Ecce homo*. In *Der Fall Wagner* [Werke; Abt. 6, Bd. 3], 285.), in English translation "It is not doubt, but certitude that drives one mad ... But in order to feel this, one must be profound, one must be an abyss, a philosopher ..." (*Ecce homo*, transl. Ludovici, 40–41)—a sentence which could hardly be understood by a scholar like al-Ghazālī.

43 Like al-Ghazālī, 'Umar Khayyām states to have delved into the doctrines of four groups claiming to have access to knowledge about God and the universe, that is the theologians, the philosophers, the Ismā'īlīs and the Ṣūfīs. Cf. Dashtī, *Bamī bā Khayyām*, 108–16 / Engl. transl. 89–93, and van Ess, "Quelques remarques", 65–66.

talking of the divine light and what he wanted to tell his readers by ending the story in this way.

Of course, “light” is a polyvalent term in al-Ghazālī’s writings, even in its restricted application to God’s relationship to mankind. Sometimes, he uses it in a very formal and unspecified way, for instance at the beginning of the *Tahāfut* which starts with the sentence: “We ask God in His majesty ... to shed upon us the lights of His guidance (*anwār al-hidāya*).”⁴⁴ There are, however, many testimonies which suggest a more specific understanding of the term. In the *Decisive Criterion* (*Fayṣal al-tafrīqā*), for example, we are told: “Belief (*īmān*) is a light that God casts in the heart of his servants.”⁴⁵ In the *Iḥyā’*, the most noble science, that is the science of disclosure (*‘ilm al-mukāshafa*) enabling us to attain true cognition of God and His acts, is called “a light appearing in our heart when it is cleaned and purified from its blameworthy attributes.”⁴⁶ And here, as well as in many other writings of his, the divine light is often compared to and equated with prophecy.

The testimonies reveal a variety of meanings but they have something in common. In all of them God’s light is presented as a gift or, more specifically, as a divine assistance. It helps us to grasp what we cannot grasp by ourselves and thereby gives us a fundamental orientation in theoretical as well as in moral matters. If this is the case, however, we have to ask after the characteristics of this divine assistance. What is its quality, its internal structure? Is it essentially rational and intelligible? Or does it follow patterns which are not open to mental comprehension and thus must be classified as beyond reason?

At first sight, it seems appropriate to understand some of the testimonies just mentioned in the second sense. Thus, it is not surprising that several scholars tended to interpret the light imagery, so often used by al-Ghazālī, solely as an expression of his mystical leanings.⁴⁷ At a closer examination, however, it turns out that the semantics of light as found in the Ghazālīan corpus is much broader and cannot be restricted to the mystical dimension. Most of the testimonies can also be interpreted on a philosophical level, and sometimes this is the only possibility to understand them in a meaningful and convincing way.

To give you just three examples. First: When using the light imagery, al-Ghazālī sometimes refers unambiguously to the sphere of mental processes. In the *Iḥyā’*, for instance, he compares the human intellect to “a light which is

44 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 1.1–2.

45 al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal*, 75.12–13.

46 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 1:19.29–20.1.

47 The “mystical” interpretation, often connected to a particular understanding of al-Ghazālī’s *Mishkāt al-anwār*, prevailed in earlier scholarship; cf. e.g. Wensinck, “Ghazālī’s *Mishkāt al-anwar*”, and Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*.

cast upon the heart enabling it to grasp the things.”⁴⁸ Some pages later, we are told that our intellect “is similar to a light shining on the soul.”⁴⁹ This is exactly the way the light metaphor was already applied by the Islamic philosophers starting with al-Fārābī’s famous *Epistle on the Intellect* (*Risāla fī l-‘aql*).⁵⁰

Second: In the case of prophecy, the term “light” refers to rational structures, too. This is corroborated by many testimonies, among them a short passage taken again from *The Book on Thinking* (*Kitāb al-Tafakkur*), i.e. Book 39 of the *Ihyā’*. There, al-Ghazālī explains: “How to make use of [two pieces of knowledge] and to utilize [them for obtaining a third piece of knowledge] is known [by two ways,] either by a divine light in the heart (*bi-nūr ilāhī fī l-qalb*) resulting from the natural disposition (*fiṭra*), as it is the case with the prophets God bless them all, and this is [a] very rare (*‘azīz jiddan*) [way], or by learning and training (*bi-l-ta‘allum wa-l-mumārasa*), and this is [the] most common [way].”⁵¹

Third: Even the aforementioned account in the *Munqidh* reporting on al-Ghazālī’s sceptical crisis should not be taken as an indication of his mystical leanings. It rather confirms that he insisted on the priority of rational structures. The report, it is true, consists of three stages: It starts with a radical doubt about sense perception, continues with a radical doubt about rational evidences and ends up with the divine light solving all the epistemological problems. However, the solution itself is not presented as a kind of supernatural unveiling or illumination. On the contrary: God’s light takes al-Ghazālī back to the principles of rationality and enables him to trust them again. This follows from his argument: “My soul regained its health and equilibrium and once again I accepted the self-evident data of reason and relied on them with safety and certainty ... it was the effect of a light which God Most High cast into my breast.”⁵²

Consequently, there are good reasons to interpret the light imagery in terms of rationality, at least in many cases. When using it in epistemological contexts, al-Ghazālī referred to our intellect and to our capacity to understand things, just as the philosophers had done before him. Despite these parallels, however, there is an interesting difference. In al-Ghazālī’s texts, “light” is not directly equated with “rationality”. It is rather presented as the key to rationality. For, having established intelligible structures in his creation, God casts His light upon us in order to initiate our reflections on the structures which He

48 al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, 1:85.12: [*al-‘aqlu*] ... *wa-ka’annahu nūrun yuqdhafu fī l-qalbi bihi yasta’iddu li-idrāki l-ashyā’i*.

49 al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, 1:88.8: [*al-‘aqlu*] ... *mithlu nūrin yushriqu ‘alā l-nafsi*.

50 al-Fārābī, *Risāla fī l-‘aql*, 25.4–27.7.

51 al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, 4:426.17–18.

52 Cf. above n. 40.

has created. By sending His light, He endows us with the gift of intellect, He teaches the prophets how to derive conclusions from two pieces of knowledge, and He helps the young Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī to overcome his sceptical crisis by regaining trust in the rational modes of evidence.

We can thus conclude that the divine light serves as a mental bridge between God and mankind. It is the way He introduces us to the secrets of creation, and it is the key which makes us understand the intelligible order of the world coined by Him. This is all the more important, since God could have created the world differently. As al-Ghazālī stressed, God has been free to determine the structures of His creation. For it is only by His decree and by the seminal act of His creation that the rational order of the world has been established the way it is.⁵³

Reflecting on God's light we have thus arrived at God's freedom and God's transcendence. This is, of course, an issue of crucial importance for it appears to be the point which connects al-Ghazālī's epistemology to his cosmology and to his reflections on metaphysics. We could thus continue now by comparing his view on rationality with his teaching about ontological and causal structures. As a matter of fact, this would lead us to observe several parallels between the two realms for, in both cases, al-Ghazālī insisted on God's absolute transcendence in regard to the structures found in his creation. To put it very briefly: According to al-Ghazālī, and in contrast to the teachings of al-Fārābī and Avicenna, God is not part of the system which He has created. He is beyond the ontological and the rational structures established by Him. Therefore, he should be addressed neither as the "First Mover" nor as the "First Intellect". As al-Ghazālī argues in the final passage of *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*), God is completely separate from these entities, the First Mover as well as the First Intellect, both of which are not even directly created by Him.⁵⁴

53 See e.g. the concluding remarks on this topic by Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 280–81.

54 al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt*, 91.13–92.4. As is well-known, the final passage of the *Mishkāt* has been subject to many discussions. They focus on the question of how to identify the different groups and doctrines to which al-Ghazālī is alluding in section 3, part 3 of his book (*Mishkāt*, 90–93). Recently, the debate has been dominated by two differing hypotheses, one of which argued by Landolt, "Ghazālī and 'Religionswissenschaft'", 38–52, the other by Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 247–64 (cf. his "Al-Ghazālī's Cosmology in the Veil Section"). Comments on both of them can be found in Mayer, Review, 126–27, and especially De Smet, "L'attitude ambivalente", 40–52, who brings further evidence in support of Landolt's interpretation. Notwithstanding their controversial views on the question of identification, however, all scholars agree about the way al-Ghazālī describes the highest doctrine which is held by those who have attained truth. According to "the attainers", God is absolutely One, and He is different from the First Mover, the First Intellect as

In our context, it is of course impossible to delve into the details of these questions. It would take us to the whole range of problems connected to al-Ghazālī's metaphysics, which need to be studied on their own and are definitely beyond the scope of this paper. So, I will once again return to the field of epistemology and just add another aspect to our previous reflections. This is the final point of my discussion which may be called:

5 The Attainment of Knowledge Depends on the Purification of the Soul or: the Reconciliation of Theoretical Science and Ethics

This part of my presentation will be very short because it refers to a well-known topic. In many of his writings, al-Ghazālī insisted on the intrinsic connection between knowledge and virtue. According to him, man cannot have cognitions and, in particular, cannot obtain God's light, as long as his own character is bad and wicked. In other words: The divine light cast upon our heart is not for free. It presupposes that we have prepared ourselves for attaining knowledge. And this, on the other hand, can only be achieved by purifying our soul from all the evil and all the vices attached to it.

Not surprisingly, this element of al-Ghazālī's teaching has often been connected to his mystical leanings. This is, of course, a persuasive explanation, all the more, since he himself referred explicitly to Ṣūfism when he presented his appeal for self-cleansing and purification.⁵⁵ There is, however, some philosophy in the background, too.⁵⁶ As far as we know, al-Ghazālī was familiar with several treatises on ethics, in particular with al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 452/1060) *The Book of Means to the Noble Virtues of the Revealed Law* (*Kitāb al-Dharī'a ilā makārim al-sharī'a*) but also with the famous *Refinement of Character* (*Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*) written by the philosopher Miskawayh (d. 421/1030).⁵⁷ So, it may well be that he took some of his inspirations in this context from these sources, reconciling thereby philosophical ethics with the elements of theoretical philosophy which he had mostly learned from Avicenna.

In principle, there is no need to demonstrate al-Ghazālī's appeal for morality by a particular reference to his writings. However, for the sake of clarity, I will give just one example. It is taken from his treatise on *The Marvels of the Heart*

well as the "Obeyed one" (*al-muṭā'ā*) who is the final principle of the universe. As such, God Himself transcends the whole system of (created) being and cannot be referred to as its "cause" (like in the doctrines of al-Fārābī and Avicenna).

55 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 35–40; cf. *idem*, *Ayyuhā l-Walad*, passim.

56 See Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī and the Rationalization of Sufism".

57 See Mohamed, "The Duties of the Teacher" further references given there.

(*ʿAjāʾib al-qalb*), that is Book 21 of the *Iḥyāʾ*, and reveals vividly al-Ghazālī's capacities in rhetoric. The text runs as follows:

From [man's] obedience to the pig of appetite there result the following characteristics: shamelessness, wickedness, wastefulness, avarice, hypocrisy, defamation, wantonness, nonsense, greed, covetousness, flattery, envy, rejoicing at another's evil, etc. As for [man's] obedience to the dog of anger there are spread thereby into the heart the qualities of rashness, squandering, haughtiness, boasting, hot temper, pride, conceit, sneering, disregard, despising of creatures, the will to evil, the lust of oppression, etc. In regard to [man's] obedience to the demon through obedience to appetite and anger, there result from it the qualities of guile, deceit, craftiness, cunning, deception, dissembling, violence, fraud, mischief, obscenity, and such like. But if the matter is reversed and man overcomes all these, bringing them under the rule of the lordly element within him, then his heart becomes the abode of such lordly qualities as knowledge, wisdom, the comprehension of the real nature of things, the knowledge of things as they really are, the subjugation of all by the power of knowledge and insight, and worthiness to advance beyond all creatures because of the completeness and majesty of his knowledge.⁵⁸

6 Conclusion

With this passage from the *ʿAjāʾib al-qalb* our reflections on al-Ghazālī have come to an end. As I said in the beginning, their focus is rather limited. For obvious reasons, I have had to concentrate on some specific issues whereas other important elements of his teaching have been neglected, although they deserve to be mentioned as well. Nevertheless, our tour d'horizon was not arbitrary. It focused on a number of points which are all interconnected. Together, they constitute a coherent series of points of advice given by al-Ghazālī to those who were eager to delve into theological questions. Taken in the reverse order, these lessons may be summarized as follows: Purify your soul in order to prepare yourself for the acts of cognition! Trust in God who will endow you with the mental faculties necessary for understanding his creation as well as the revelation sent to the prophets! Make use of these faculties in order to reveal the erroneous views of the philosophers! And when all of this has been

⁵⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 3:11.24–31. The book *ʿAjāʾib al-qalb* is of central importance within the *Iḥyāʾ* and certainly deserves further study; cf. Janssens, "Al-Ghazālī between Philosophy and Sufism".

accomplished, the same mental faculties will help you to substantiate your own convictions and to explain the truth of Islam.

Having arrived at this point there remains only one question: Did the scholars or some of the scholars living after al-Ghazālī follow his advice? And, if yes: Did they follow it the way al-Ghazālī wanted his lessons to be understood?

Of course, this question opens the gate to many further topics. It directs our attention to the broad field of what could be called al-Ghazālī's reception in later Islamic scholarship, which is in itself a complex and multifarious issue. In some cases, it seems to be quite easy to follow his tracks. This applies, for example, to our first point that is his promotion of logic. As is well-known, it was extremely successful paving the way to an unprecedented rise of logical studies, in particular among later theologians⁵⁹ but also among jurists.⁶⁰ In other cases, it is more difficult to reveal al-Ghazālī's impact on later authors. This is all the truer since his impact may have concerned various scholarly and non-scholarly fields. The purification of the soul, for instance, was an element common to Sūfism and philosophy, including the mystical philosophers elaborating on the doctrine of Ibn al-'Arabī. So was the motif of God's light. In this case, however it may be worth paying particular attention to Suhrawardī, whose references to al-Ghazālī have not been fully examined so far.

As concerns his sceptical tendency and his idea of making critical usage of logic, further investigation might be particularly delicate. Yet there seem to be some candidates who may have followed al-Ghazālī's steps into this direction. One of them is Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. before 560/1164–65) whose critical engagement with Avicennan philosophy is well-known. Other candidates are Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī (d. about 590/1194) and Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī (d. before 605/1208). Inspired by their reading of the *Tahāfut* and the *Munqidh* both of them focused on a dialectically-oriented type of theology, as opposed to the system-oriented *kalām* of classical Ash'arism. This, in turn, paved the way for Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and his attempt to elaborate a new theological and philosophical synthesis combining the various approaches of his predecessors.⁶¹ Speaking in logical terms, there seems to have been a certain shift from the exclusive concentration on demonstrative science to other

59 See the articles by Tony Street (on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī), Gerhard Endress (on Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī), Denis Gril (on Ibn 'Arabī), Anke von Kügelgen (on Ibn Taymiyya) and Wilferd Madelung (on al-Taftāzānī) published in *Logik und Theologie*.

60 Cf., recently, Rudolph, "Al-Ghazālī on Philosophy and Jurisprudence", 82–88.

61 See for all this Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī"; *idem*, "A Post-Ghazālīan Critic of Avicenna", 139–47; *idem*, *Doubts on Avicenna*, esp. 1–6. An additional representative of this tendency in the Islamic west would be Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Miklātī (d. 626/1229). On his life and doctrine see Adouhane, "Al-Miklātī", and *eadem*, *Une critique aš'arite*.

branches of logic. In this context, it has recently been suggested to talk of a “dialectical turn”.⁶² I am not sure if this is the appropriate term to describe the phenomenon but the assumption that there was some sceptical tendency in later applications of logic should be taken seriously. It fits very well with the overall impression that al-Ghazālī had a deep impact on later scholarship, which must remain the subject of further research.⁶³

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62 Griffel, “Between al-Ghazālī and Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī”.

63 Cf. also the evidence given by Gutas, “Philosophy in the Twelfth Century”.

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Al-Rāzī's Earliest *Kalām* Work

Eastern Ash'arism in the Twelfth Century

Ayman Shihadeh

The last quarter of the fifth/eleventh century and the first three quarters of the sixth/twelfth century—the century or so after al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085)—define a pivotal phase of transition in Islamic theology.¹ With the waning of classical Ash'arism, a tradition that drew on Baṣran Mu'tazilism and Traditionalist theology for its main terms of reference, this phase culminated by the last quarter of the sixth/twelfth century in the rise of neo-Ash'arism, the later tradition that drew chiefly on classical Ash'arī theology and Avicennan philosophy, through the efforts of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 544/1150–606/1210). The circumstances that engendered this transition are gradually coming to light, as some of the “twilight” figures and texts, eclipsed by the more familiar elements of the received textual-historical canon, have been receiving increasing attention.²

Among such twilight texts, any extant juvenilia of al-Rāzī would provide precious new insight into his study, early career and wider milieu in the mid sixth/twelfth century, especially if read in tandem with the newly-discovered *kalām* summa written by his father Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Makkī (d. 559/1163–64), titled *Nihāyat al-marām fī dirāyat al-kalām* (on which see now also the postscript on p. 70 below).³ This paper examines one such text: a lengthy theological summa, which survives in a unique manuscript and has so far escaped notice.⁴ Though ostensibly an early work by al-Rāzī, the text appears, upon closer inspection, to be of uncertain authenticity. In what follows, we verify the author's identity and situate the text in its wider context.

1 This paper was completed in early 2011, but was delayed due to circumstances outside the author's control. It was updated at a later stage.

2 The most important such figures are Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī and Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī, on whom see my “From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī”, “A Post-Ghazālīan Critic of Avicenna” and *Doubts on Avicenna*.

3 Al-Makkī, *Nihāyat al-marām fī dirāyat al-kalām*, MS Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh Oriental Manuscript Library, *Kalām* 13. I published this in 2013 as *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Father, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Makkī, Nihāyat al-marām fī dirāyat al-kalām: Facsimile of the Autograph Manuscript of Vol. II*.

4 To my knowledge, the text was first cited in my *Teleological Ethics* (7; 268).

1 The Beirut Manuscript

MS Beirut, American University of Beirut Library, 297:R27kA, is 239 folios long (18.5 × 12.5 cm, text area 15 × 9 cm; 20–39 lines per page).⁵ The quires are quinternions, i.e. they consist of five bifolios each. The copy is written in a remarkably inconsistent scholar's hand, ranging gradually from a large and relatively elegant *naskh* to a smaller and more cursive *ta'liq* style, all by the same scribe.

The manuscript is incomplete at the beginning, as the first page of text (fol. 2^r) begins in mid-sentence. That the next section heading, "Section on the definition of rational reflection", appears in the fourth line of this page indicates that only a short portion of the text is missing, equivalent to one or three pages (based, as we shall see, on the text's correspondence to al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*; see 61 below).

Confirming this is that the first quire (fols 2–7), whose centre is between fols 4–5, appears to consist of three bifolios and is missing its outer bifolio and, in all likelihood, the next-to-outer bifolio. Hence, it misses one or two folios at the end of the quire (between fols 7–8), containing the end of the discussion on reflection (*naẓar*) and the beginning of the discussion on knowledge; and one or two folios at the beginning of the quire, which contained the original title page and the initial page or three pages of the main text. Folio 1, on which the current title page appears, is of a slightly smaller size than the other folios and may have been pasted into the codex later. However, I have not been able to examine the codex physically to ascertain this.

The text ends on fol. 238^r. The following colophon indicates that the copy was completed on Wednesday, 10 Jumādā II 582 (28 August 1186), having been transcribed (*taḥrīr*) by the owner (*ṣāhib*) of the manuscript copy.⁶

والحمد لله رب العالمين والصلوة على محمد وآله أجمعين وقع الفراغ من تحريره يوم
الأربعاء العاشر من جمادى الآخرة سنة اثنين وثمانين وخمس مائة على يدي
صاحبه غفر الله ذنوبه وستر عيوبه⁷

The title page (fol. 1^r), gives the title as *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn 'aqā'id ahl al-sunna* (sic.), and the author's name as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī:

5 A brief description is provided in Khūrī, *al-Makhṭūṭāt al-'arabiyya*, 62–63.

6 This, to my mind, is how this standard note should be read (for other examples of such statements, see Gacek, "Ownership Statements", 88–95). In other contexts, *ṣāhib* may refer to the author, and *taḥrīr* to revision.

7 Some *hamzas* and dots have been added to the Arabic texts transcribed here.

هذا كتاب في أصول الدين عقايد أهل السنة تأليف الشيخ الإمام علامة
الزمان مجدد الدين مولانا فخر الدين الرازي قدس الله روحه ونور ضريحه أتى
فيه بالعجب العجاب من ذكر العقائد الصحيحة والرد على المبطلين فجزاه الله
خيراً

Whereas the colophon dates the copy to al-Rāzī's lifetime, the contents of the title page are written in a different, later hand, as confirmed by the formulaic prayer appended to al-Rāzī's name. Various later notes, of no relevance to the identification of the text, appear on fols 1^{r-v} and 238^r. Folios 238^v–239^v contain an incomplete copy of al-Shahrastānī's epistle on atomism, in a later hand.⁸

2 The Juwaynian Background

Although we still know little about the reception of al-Juwaynī's theological works, particularly his *Kitāb al-Irshād* and the *Shāmīl*, in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, there is evidence that they were hugely influential on the immediately subsequent mainstream eastern Ash'arī tradition, as we can see, for instance, in the extant theological works of al-Mutawallī (d. 478/1085), Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. 512/1118), al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī (d. 504/1110) and Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Makkī.⁹ Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) writes, with pointed sarcasm, that al-Juwaynī's "well-known" *Irshād* "is the holy book of the later ones (*zabūr al-muta'akhhirīn*) among his followers [that is, the Ash'arīs], just as the *Ghurar* [*al-adilla*] and *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla* of Abū l-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī] are the holy books of the later Mu'tazila, and just as the *Ishārāt* of Avicenna is the holy book of the later philosophers!"¹⁰ Al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*, a medium-sized

8 Corresponding to the epistle published alongside *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 505.2–510.7.

9 Respectively: al-Mutawallī, *Mughnī*; al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya* (an edition of approximately the first two thirds of the book was published in 2010; however, most references will be to the manuscript copy of the unpublished part); al-Harrāsī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn*; al-Makkī, *Nihāyat al-marām*.

10 He adds: "They have split among themselves each with their books of scripture (*zabur*), and each party rejoicing in their own [Q. 23.53]! Yet Abū l-Ma'ālī [al-Juwaynī]'s group are closer to, and more deserving of [being associated with], Islam" (Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā*, 6, 507–8). The expression *zabūr* here does not denote the Psalms, but is used generically in the sense of "holy book". By citing the foregoing Qur'ānic verse, Ibn Taymiyya implies that the obstinate and uncritical imitation that each party exhibits with respect to their authoritative texts has resulted in entrenched divisions within the Muslim community.

compendium, seems to have attracted some commentarial activity: his student al-Anṣārī wrote a commentary,¹¹ and al-Rāzī was planning to write a further commentary, though he most probably never did.¹² There is also an extant abridgement of the *Shāmīl* attributed to a certain Ibn al-Amīr, possibly a twelfth-century eastern Ashʿarī.¹³

It is within this Juwaynī-influenced mainstream tradition that our text was written, the most striking feature thereof being its close dependence, in structure, on the *Irshād*. An outline of the book's contents is provided at the end of this article. The very few alterations made to the arrangement of topics and problems are overall minor. Many sections are lengthier than their counterparts in the *Irshād*; but some have been expanded disproportionately, mostly with material drawn in bulk from other sources. For instance, the 56-page section responding to anthropomorphic interpretations of scripture, at least ten times longer than the corresponding section in the *Irshād*, is compiled largely from Ibn Fūrak's *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*.¹⁴ The lengthy discussion on the Prophet's miracles draws on an unnamed source.¹⁵ There are also numerous citations of earlier generations of Ashʿarīs, especially of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936), al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāʾīnī (d. 418/1027),

11 Al-Anṣārī, *Sharḥ al-Irshād*, MS Istanbul, Ayasofia, 1205. A copy of the first volume also survives in MS Princeton, Yahuda, 634 (Mach, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts*, 257).

12 See p. 60 below. A much richer and longer tradition of commentaries on the *Irshād* thrived in the western Ashʿarī tradition. Commentaries were written, for instance, by (1) Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Māzarī al-Iskandarānī (d. 530/1136), (2) the Andalusian ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Fazārī (d. 557/1162) (on whose commentary see my "Classical Ashʿarī Anthropology", 476–77), (3) the Andalusian Ibn al-Marʾa (d. 611/1214–15), (4) the Egyptian Taqī al-Dīn al-Muqtaraḥ (d. 612/1215), (5) his student Zakariyyā ibn Yahyā al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī (d. ?), (6) Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ishbīlī, known as al-Khaḥfāf (*fl.* 7th/13th c.), (7) Ibn Bazīza (d. 662/1264) of Tunis, (8) a certain Abū Bakr ibn Maymūn, who lived in Granada during the lifetime of, or soon after, the vizier and historian Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1375), whom he mentions in his published commentary (*Sharḥ al-Irshād*, 589–91), and (9) ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Sharīf al-Tilimsānī (d. 826/1423) ("al-Sharīf al-Tilimsānī", *El2*). (See the bibliography for published editions of books 4, 7 and 8).

13 Judging partly by the style of *naskh* in which the sole manuscript copy is transcribed (MS Istanbul, Ahmed III, 1322). See the bibliography for the published edition. The editor identifies the abridger as Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Tabrīzī ibn Amīr al-Ḥājj (d. 736/1336), a Ḥanafī figure, but does not substantiate this identification. I suspend judgement on the identity of the abridger for now. It is curious that the abridger refers to al-Juwaynī incorrectly as Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik instead of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿAbdallāh (1, 168).

14 *Uṣūl*, fols 65^r.1–93^v.23; Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, 16 ff. Ibn Fūrak is cited explicitly on fols 86^v.23–4 and 93^v.16–17.

15 *Uṣūl*, fols 150^v.25–158^v.25.

though at least some appear to be extracted from later sources, most evidently al-Juwaynī's works.¹⁶

The text, furthermore, includes new sections not found in the *Irshād*. Two discussions, for instance, are introduced into the chapter on creation: namely, five introductory sections on the atom and the non-existent, and one concluding section responding to those who assert that the world is pre-eternal.¹⁷ Major additions are also found in the discussions on commanding good and forbidding evil and the imāmate.

The book's Juwaynian influence is evident not only in its structure, but also in its content. The text of the *Irshād* is largely paraphrased or incorporated verbatim and expanded upon, often by drawing on further sources, especially al-Juwaynī's major summa, the *Shāmil*. This deferential attitude that underlies the book is admitted in one place where the author appears unconvinced by certain notions current in classical Ash'arism and reflected in al-Juwaynī's works, but declares that he will go along with them regardless. He writes:

Know that the Mutakallimūn have divided their opponents [who maintain that the world is pre-eternal into types]. So they discuss Eternalists (*azaliyya*) separately, Exponents of Antemundane Matter (*aṣḥāb al-hayūlā*) separately, and then Dualists, Exponents of the Theory of Natures and Astrologers. They are all in reality one and the same group. However, we will follow the conventions of the Mutakallimūn.¹⁸

Despite the text's dependence on the *Irshād*, it is not a commentary thereon and very rarely indicates that it quotes or paraphrases al-Juwaynī, though there might have been a blanket acknowledgement of the author's dependence on al-Juwaynī in the preface, now missing. Indeed, the book contains an unusually small number of explicit references to al-Juwaynī, none of which name any of his works. I have found only one mention of him as "al-Shaykh al-Imām Abū l-Ma'ālī raḍiya llāhu 'anhu".¹⁹ In numerous places elsewhere in the book, he is referred to as "al-Imām", which (alongside "Imām al-Ḥaramayn") is a standard

16 There is also a reference, in the chapter on ethical theory, to the Baṣran Mu'tazilī theologian Abū l-Ḥusayn (d. 436/1045) "known as 'al-Baṣrī', who is among their later figures" (fol. 133^v.19). This is one of the earliest known references to Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī in an Ash'arī text. Other early references are found in Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī's *Ghunya* (1, 553) and al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī's *Uṣūl al-dīn* (e.g. fols 104^v.6; 221^r.7–8), who too describes Abū l-Ḥusayn as "one of the later figures among" the Mu'tazilā.

17 *Uṣūl*, fols 13^r.16–18^v.15; 23^r.20–30^r.19.

18 *Uṣūl*, fol. 24^r.10–13.

19 *Uṣūl*, fol. 8^r.9.

title for al-Juwaynī in late eleventh- and early twelfth-century Ash'arī sources, before al-Rāzī became “al-Imām” among Ash'arīs. It is noteworthy that the text nowhere contains any suggestions that the author studied with al-Juwaynī, be that a reference to him as “our *shaykh*”, or a hint that his teachings may have been received orally (similar, as we shall see, to references made to the author's father).

2.1 *Juwaynian Content: the States (ḥāl)*

A case in which the extent of the Juwaynian character of the book can be illustrated is the discussion on the theory of the “state” (*ḥāl*), which receives a distinctly Juwaynian treatment in the *Irshād* and the *Shāmīl*.²⁰ The section on the states opens as follows:

Our school members reject the doctrine of the state. The first to proclaim the doctrine of the state was Abū Hāshim [al-Jubbā'ī]. The Qāḍī [al-Bāqillānī] reproduced (*raddada*) his arguments (*jawābahu*) for affirming the states, and was inclined towards affirming the states.²¹

This is a condensed account of the historical outline introducing the discussion in the *Shāmīl*:

[...] Most *kalām* exponents of both the orthodox (*ahl al-ḥaqq*) [that is, Ash'arīs] and the early Mu'tazila took the view that when knowledge subsists in a substrate, and if the substrate then becomes characterised as being a knower, then its being a knower is distinct from the knowledge that subsists therein, but is not a state additional to it. [Abū Hāshim] ibn al-Jubbā'ī maintained that when knowledge subsists in a substrate, it causes it to become a knower. Hence, its being a knower is a state that is additional to both knowledge and the essence [of the object itself]. [...] The Qāḍī [al-Bāqillānī] reproduced (*raddada*) his arguments (*jawābahu*) for denying and affirming the state [...].²²

Though al-Juwaynī then goes on to write that al-Bāqillānī accepted this doctrine in some works and rejected it in others, the ensuing discussion treats him

20 On al-Juwaynī's doctrine of the states, see Benevich, “The Classical Ash'ari Theory of *aḥwāl*”; Thiele, “Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī”.

21 *Uṣūl*, fol. 46^r.25–6.

22 Al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 629.7–13.

as an exponent of the doctrine: whence the author's assertion that al-Bāqillānī "is inclined towards affirming the states".

The text then explains that according to this doctrine, "by virtue of being space-occupying, the atom will have the state of being space-occupying; the state is an attribute that an existing being has, and that itself cannot be described as existent".²³ It then paraphrases the distinction that al-Juwaynī makes in the *Irshād* between states that are caused (*mu'allal*) by a superadditionnal object (*ma'nā*) that inheres in the attribute-receiving object and uncaused states.²⁴ This is contrasted, first, with Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī's position that a state is caused by any attribute that is conditional upon the object being alive, or by an accident of location (*kawn*, pl. *akwān*), and second, with al-Bāqillānī's broader notion that every attribute, regardless of whether it presupposes life, causes the object to be possessed of a corresponding state.²⁵ Summarising a lengthy discussion in the *Shāmīl*, the author then writes: "According to Abū Hāshim, states are neither knowable nor unknowable and neither existent nor nonexistent, whereas the Qāḍī [al-Bāqillānī] maintains that they are knowable but neither existent nor nonexistent".²⁶ Then comes an argument in support of the doctrine of the states,²⁷ followed by another argument that explains that when I assert that I know a thing in one respect (*wajh*) but not in another, I actually refer to my discernment of a particular state that that thing has.²⁸ The discussion on states is concluded as follows:

If it is then said, "How do you affirm a thing that is neither existent nor nonexistent?", we say: This is an exaggeration (*tahwīl*) that leads to naught. For our position is that our knowledge-objects are divided into existents, nonexistents and attributes of existents, characterised as being neither existent nor nonexistent.²⁹

This last defence draws on a similar point made in the *Shāmīl*.³⁰ Yet the tone of the response, especially the accusation of the critics as being melodramatic, is the author's own and indicates that he himself subscribes to the doctrine.

23 Cf. al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 80.6; 81.2–7; *idem*, *Shāmīl*, 360.10–13.

24 Cf. al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 80.7–81.1.

25 Paraphrasing al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 629.17–630.8.

26 *Uṣūl*, fols 46^r.32–46^v.2; cf. al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 640.18–645.20.

27 *Uṣūl*, fol. 46^v.2–6, paraphrasing al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 83.5–14.

28 *Uṣūl*, fol. 46^v.6–11, paraphrasing al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 82.1–6.

29 *Uṣūl*, fol. 46^v.11–13.

30 Al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 640.2–4; cf. 641.6–8.

We are here presented with a curious picture. In classical Ash'arism, the doctrine of states, as explicated in the *Irshād* and the *Shāmīl*, is unique to al-Juwaynī and contrasts with the standard school position, including the view of his student Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī.³¹ Yet the author takes it fully on board, offering a synopsis extracted entirely from these two Juwaynian works, before attempting to make his own (minor) contribution (in some other discussions, more substantial contributions are offered). More curious, however, is that the extent of the author's dependence on al-Juwaynī is such that al-Juwaynī himself, no less an important proponent of the doctrine than al-Bāqillānī, is nowhere mentioned, as though he was not being paraphrased, but was still the author.

Yet the author of *Uṣūl al-dīn* was not attempting to distance himself from al-Juwaynī and to write independently as a theologian in his own right. His main objective was not to write a new *kalām* compendium of his own, presenting, as it were, the results of his own theological thinking, as much as it was to produce a summary of Juwaynian theology, supplemented in some places with extracts from more specialised sources.

2.2 *Non-Juwaynian Content: the Proof of God's Existence*

Although the text, it appears, nowhere goes explicitly against al-Juwaynī, there are occasional places of indirect conflict, which occur when other sources are drawn upon. A case in point appears in the chapter on proving the existence of God.³² The chapter begins with a brief summary of the argument from creation *ex nihilo* using the principle of particularisation, based on both the *Shāmīl* and the *Irshād*.³³ This is followed by a relatively lengthy overview of the problem of whether passing away (*ʿadam*), just like coming to be (*ḥudūth*), requires a cause, which draws on the *Shāmīl*.³⁴ Next follows this alternative version of the argument from creation *ex nihilo*:

Among the arguments used by certain school authorities is this. Our acquisitions (*aksāb*) must have an agent (*fāʿil*). If we then reflect and ask, "Why do they require an agent?", we will not find anything that makes it necessary for them to have an agent other than their being acts. So we

31 Al-Anṣārī (*Ghunya*, 1, 485 ff.) justifies his rejection of the doctrine by reporting that al-Juwaynī changed his view and himself rejected it later in his life.

32 *Uṣūl*, fols 30^r.20–32^r.8.

33 *Uṣūl*, fols 30^r.21–30^v.8; cf. al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 262.15 ff.; *idem*, *Irshād*, 28.1–29.12.

34 *Uṣūl*, fols 30^v.8–31^r.23; cf. al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 268.7–271.20. On arguments from particularisation, including the versions advanced by al-Juwaynī, see Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, 154–212. For an overview, see Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", 209–11.

infer that all that is an act must have an agent. The referent (*ma'nā*) of "act" is that [a thing] did not exist and then came to be. Hence, as we know that the world is an existent that did not exist and then came into existence, we will recognise it as an act. Therefore, it must have an agent.

If it is said, "According to you [Ash'arīs], we are not real agents; so how do you argue from this [starting point]?" We say: According to our early school authorities, we are agents in reality. However, the Lord is a creating (*mukhtari*) agent, while we are acquiring (*muktasib*) agents. This nullifies their objection. According to Abū l-Ḥasan [al-Ash'arī, on the other hand,] we are called "agents" only figuratively, in which case the former method [that is, the argument from particularisation] should be used as proof.

One of our school members answered [the foregoing objection] by arguing that the dependence (*ḥāja*) of the acquisition on the acquirer is weaker than the dependence of the act on the agent. For that which is [an instance of] acquisition may exist without it having been acquired, since God can create it within us without providing us with the capacity for it. As for that which is an act, it can only come into being when produced by God, exalted, and cannot come into being not as an act. Therefore, since [even an instance of] acquisition, despite being weakly dependent on the acquirer, cannot be acquisition without the acquirer, the act, considering its close dependence on the agent, must be more deserving of being characterised as requiring an agent.

It has also been argued that acquisition has a certain dependence on the acquirer (*lil-kasb bi-l-muktasib ta'alluq*), just as the act is dependent on the agent. Hence, since it is inconceivable for acquisition to exist without an acquirer, given the dependence between the two, the act too must have an agent, given the dependence between the two.³⁵

This line of argument, apparently accepted by the author, is inspired by the standard Bahshamī Mu'tazilī argument from creation *ex nihilo*, which analogises God's act of generating the world with our generating our own acts. My act, the Bahshamī argument goes, depends (*muhtāj, muta'alliq*) on me because it occurs in accordance with my motives; and it is dependent on me precisely for its coming to be (*ḥudūth*). Since the world is temporally originated, it too requires a creator, who must be pre-eternal.³⁶ Ash'arīs are accused of being

35 *Uṣūl*, fols 31^r.23–31^v.15.

36 For an overview of this analogical argument, see Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmū'*, 1, 68 ff.; cf. Shihadeh, "Existence of God", 207–8. On the Bahshamī and classical Ash'arī accounts of the causal premise employed in the proof from creation *ex nihilo*, and the transformation introduced by al-Rāzī under the influence of Avicenna, see my "Al-Rāzī's *Commentary*", 319–23.

incapable of affirming a cause for temporal origination in the unseen realm (*al-ghā'ib*) since they do not affirm for it a cause in the seen realm (*al-shāhid*) (al-Juwaynī responds to this accusation in the *Shāmīl*).³⁷

Indeed, as the author is clearly aware, this argument goes against the mainstream Ash'arī position. It is hinted at and rejected cursorily in the *Irshād* and the *Shāmīl* by al-Juwaynī, who transmits that an unnamed school member asserted that “writing is connected (*irtabaṭa*) to the writer”, and replies:

The building has no dependence (*ta'alluq*) on the builder, to start with. The consistency of the normal course of events (*al-ādāt*) does not make anything dependent (*yu'alliqu*) on another. We thus reject the principle of dependence. The uniformity of the normal course of events is not the same as dependence,³⁸ as will be clear to anyone who reflects upon this. How could the claim, that dependence can be affirmed on account of the normal course of events, be sustained when one also accepts that [the normal course of events] may be broken!³⁹

The denial, in classical Ash'arism, of any efficient causation in producing the human act on the part of its human agent meant that classical Ash'arīs could not affirm the causal principle in the argument from creation *ex nihilo* using an analogy with human acts, but appealed instead to the principle of particularisation.

The above passage shows, for the first time, that at least one classical Ash'arī developed an argument cognate to the Bahshamī argument from the analogy with human action, as an alternative to the argument from particularisation. Ibn Taymiyya reports that some Ash'arīs and non-Ash'arīs replicated this Mu'tazilī argument from analogy, only naming Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) as an example of the former as well as the Ḥanbalī Abū l-Wafā' ibn 'Aqīl (d. 513/1119), although their surviving works show no evidence of this.⁴⁰ It is perfectly plausible that al-Qushayrī is the earlier Ash'arī referred to by the author of *Uṣūl al-dīn*. Aware that the argument is rejected by most school members, the author surprisingly takes it on board, albeit tentatively and noncommittally. Yet despite going against the mainstream school tradition, he again displays a preoccupation primarily with the summary and collation of earlier sources.

37 Al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 276.20–277.8; 285.1–286.12.

38 Reading *bi-ta'alluq* for *yata'alluqu*.

39 Al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 283.18–284.9.

40 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, 8, 296.

3 Possible Criticism of al-Ghazālī

The book contains no references to al-Ghazālī, nor any evident Ghazālīan influence that I could find. Yet there is one place where the author directs his criticism at doctrines espoused by unnamed opponents, of which al-Ghazālī appears to be the most eminent and likely representative.

The section on the “reality of the spirit” (*rūḥ*) draws partly on al-Juwaynī’s *Irshād* and, in line with classical Ash’arism, defends a materialist human ontology.⁴¹ Having discussed a range of different theories of the human soul, including the philosophers’ doctrine of the rational soul, the author mentions the argument that the Qur’ānic verse, “They ask you about the spirit; say the spirit pertains to my Lord (*min amr rabbī*)” (17.85), indicates that God made the spirit unknowable (neither immediately nor through reflection) and did not explain its reality.⁴² His response, of little relevance here, confirms that the nature of the spirit is indeed knowable to us.

The author goes on to direct his most scathing criticism, not at the aforementioned *falāsifa*, but at certain philosophising Muslims, who appear to espouse a fully-fledged and well-articulated doctrine of the soul:

It is strange that some who adhere to Islam and philosophise (*yatafalsafūna*) claim that the soul is neither a body, an accident nor an atom, but belongs to a higher realm (*‘ālam al-amr*) and cannot have any physical qualities (*kayfiyya*). They believe that it is possessed of the same [features] that the Lord has, namely that it does not have physical qualities nor a spatial boundary (*ḥadd*) and is not space-occupying (*tahayyuz*). As evidence, they cite the report, “He who knows his soul knows his Lord”. But how do they know what they say they do, when they claim that the soul cannot be known, since God made it unknowable and did not explain it [even] to His prophet, may God bless him, let alone to others! They thus do not permit discussion of [the soul]; and yet they permit themselves to assert that it is intrinsically living, knowing and possessed of capacity, that it is the true object of [divine] address, [divine] command and [posthumous] punishment (*al-mukhāṭab al-mukallaḥ al-mu‘āqab*), and is not an atom, a body or an accident, nor is space-occupying!⁴³

41 *Uṣūl*, fols 178^v.8–180^r.12; cf. al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 377.1–10. On this see Shihadeh, “Classical Ash’arī Anthropology”, 433–77.

42 *Uṣūl*, fol. 179^r.12–14.

43 *Uṣūl*, fols 179^r.22–179^v.6.

The author responds to this doctrine, concluding that “to espouse this doctrine amounts, in truth, to a departure from Islam and a rejection of bodily resurrection”.⁴⁴

That the targets of this criticism are religious thinkers, as opposed to the aforementioned *falāsifa*, is evident not only in the reference to those who “adhere to Islam and philosophise”, but furthermore in both the contention that the soul is unknowable and the prominence given to Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* evidence. The author’s emphasis on a rather peculiar case of contradiction, namely the assertion that the soul is both immaterial and somehow unknowable, indicates that he has in mind specific philosophically-influenced theologians. We must, of course, isolate the polemical content in the above passage, particularly the charge that the doctrine of the rational soul amounts to a denial of bodily resurrection, a doctrine that is unlikely to be conceded by a theologian of that period.

Although the doctrine of the immaterial soul was advocated by several earlier theologians, the intended target of criticism here is most probably al-Ghazālī, or less known theologians influenced by him. He, first of all, appears to defend incoherent conceptions of human ontology in different works of his.⁴⁵ In some of his widely-read books, he refrains from proclaiming the doctrine of the immaterial soul openly and suggests that the nature of the soul is unknowable, citing Q. 17.85 as evidence.⁴⁶ In works directed at a much narrower learned readership, he defends this doctrine on both rational and scriptural grounds, including the *ḥadīth*, “He who knows his soul knows his Lord”.⁴⁷ He also speaks of the soul as existing in an unseen, immaterial higher realm (*‘ālam al-amr*), as opposed to the seen, material realm (*‘ālam al-khalq*).⁴⁸

No theologian earlier than al-Ghazālī is known to have employed these terms and is at the same time deserving of the attention afforded by the author of *Uṣūl al-dīn*. Few, furthermore, can be aptly referred to as “philosophising” Muslims, rather than in more sectarian terms, as would be expected in the case of the Mu‘tazilī Mu‘ammar ibn ‘Abbād (d. 215/830) or the Shī‘ī al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1032), both proponents of conceptions of an immaterial human soul. If al-Ghazālī is, as indeed appears to be the case, the intended target of criticism in the above passage, this would attest to the opposition he faced within mainstream eastern Ash‘arism. This would also suggest that the

44 Again, the details and complex background of this response, of little relevance here, will be investigated elsewhere.

45 On why he does so, see Shihadeh, “Al-Ghazālī and *Kalām*”.

46 For instance, al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, 4, 298; 479.

47 For instance, al-Ghazālī, *Nafkh al-rūḥ*, 29 ff.; 37.

48 For instance, al-Ghazālī, *Nafkh al-rūḥ*, 33–35; *idem*, *Ihyā’*, 3, 371; 4, 25.

book has a rough *terminus post quem* of 500/1106, as it could not have been written earlier than the latest phase in al-Ghazālī's career, in which his theory of the soul, elaborated in his later works, was gaining attention following his return to Khurasan.⁴⁹

4 The Author

We shall now turn to the authorship of the text, a task made all the more challenging by the fact that it contains only a handful of clues to grope for, none of which shed light directly on the author's identity. There is a marked scarcity of a personal "touch". While al-Juwaynī, in key places in the *Irshād*, addresses his readers (typically by *i'lamū aḥsana llāhu irshādakum*) and offers prefatory explanations of the rationale underlying his approach to certain subjects, the voice of our author is remarkably faint.⁵⁰ There are, furthermore, no references to any identifiable books by the author, though in the chapter on the imāmate he writes that "the Rāfiḍa and their types will be discussed in a dedicated book".⁵¹ Whether or not the author did eventually write this book, either way I am not aware of any such book ascribed to a late-eleventh- or early-twelfth-century Ash'arī. In another place, the author refers to the Karrāmī doctrine that the dead continue to have sensory perception and to experience pain, and notes that "we indeed heard them assert that".⁵² This suggests that he was most likely from Khurasan, where the Ḥanafī Karrāmiyya were spread alongside Ash'arīs.

4.1 *References to the Author's Father*

More substantial clues are found in the author's reference, in three places, to "my father the imām", though neither the father is named, nor are any book titles of his mentioned. These citations immediately limit the range of possible authors, given the relatively small number of post-Juwaynian Ash'arīs whose fathers were prominent theologians worthy of being cited, albeit on such a small number of occasions. Three figures in particular deserve consideration. First,

49 A campaign was waged against al-Ghazālī following his appointment at the Nizāmiyya College in Nishapur in 499/1106. On this see Garden, "Al-Māzarī al-Dhakī"; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī*, 53 ff.

50 For example, al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 79.14–80.3 (presented in an impersonal style in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, fol. 46^r.23–25); *Irshād*, 101.9–14 (absent in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, fol. 50^r); and *Irshād*, 256.12–258.1 (absent in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, fol. 132^r).

51 *Uṣūl*, fol. 237^r.8–9.

52 *Uṣūl*, fol. 163^v.8–9.

Abū Naṣr ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120), the son of the well-known Ash‘arī and Sufi Abū l-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, who studied *kalām* and Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence with both his father and al-Juwaynī, and then taught at the Nizāmiyya College in Baghdad.⁵³ Second, Abū l-Faṭḥ Nāṣir al-Anṣārī (d. 552/1157), the son of Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. 512/1118), al-Juwaynī’s most important *kalām* student.⁵⁴ Third, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), who began his studies under his father Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn al-Makkī, the student of Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī.

The citations can be compared against the available writings of the three fathers. We have various published texts by Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, the *Ghunya* by Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī, and the second volume of *Nihāyat al-marām* by al-Makkī.

4.1.1 Miraculous Gifts (*Karāma*)

The first citation appears in the discussion on magic and the miraculous gifts (*karāmāt*) that God bestows upon His dedicatees (*awlīyā*):

[1] والكرامة وإن كانت لا تظهر على فاسق معن بالفسق فلا تشهد بالولاية على قطع، إذ لو شهدت لأمن صاحبها العواقب، وذلك لم يجوز لولي في كرامة اتفاقاً.
[2] وهكذا ذكره أصحاب القاضي عنه. وكان الإمام والذي رضي الله عنه يقول لا يبعد أن يكون من كرامة الله الولي أن يعرفه بسلامة عاقبته ويزول الخوف عنه، ولكن تقوم الهيبة مقام الخوف، والهيبة أعلى من مقام الخوف. وقد بشر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عشرة بالجنة وصدقوه، ولم يدل ذلك على قصور في حقهم. وقال الله لنبيه، “ليغفر لك الله ما تقدم من ذنبك وما تأخر”، ولم يؤد ذلك إلى خلل في التزام التكليف.⁵⁵

Part 1 of this passage is extracted from the *Irshād*, where al-Juwaynī argues that a miraculous gift cannot provide conclusive evidence of the individual’s status as God’s dedicatee, for otherwise that individual would be certain that he would evade posthumous punishment.⁵⁶ It is agreed by all, al-Juwaynī points out, that no miraculous gift could provide such certitude. In part 2, which does not appear in the *Irshād*, the author reports that al-Bāqillānī’s students ascribed this same position to their teacher.

53 On him, see, for instance: al-Fārisī, *Mukhtaṣar*, 215–16; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7, 159–69.

54 On him, see: al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7, 317.

55 *Uṣūl*, fol. 147^r. 7–13.

56 Al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 323.5–7.

The author then attributes the opposite position to his father, who reportedly maintained that it was indeed possible for God to bestow, as a gift upon His dedicatee, knowledge of his salvation in the afterlife, relieving him from the fear arising from the uncertainty of his fate. As this fear (*khawf*) will be replaced by venerative awe (*hayba*), a higher station, the absence of the former motive will not undermine this individual's commitment to religious obligations. Two scriptural pieces of evidence are cited: the *ḥadīth* of the ten companions whom the Prophet gave glad tidings of their entry to paradise, and a Qur'ānic verse (48.2) that informs the Prophet that his sins will be forgiven (the author here does not comment on the separate problem of whether a prophet may sin).

The first theologian to promote this teaching in Ash'arism appears to be Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, who discusses it in two places in his *Risāla* on Sufism. He writes in the section on God's dedicatees:

واختلفوا في أن الولي هل يجوز أن يعلم أنه ولي أم لا. فمنهم من قال لا يجوز ذلك [...] وإليه ذهب من شيوخ هذه الطائفة جماعة لا يحصون [...], وإلى هذا كان يذهب من شيوخنا الذين لقيناهم الإمام أبو بكر بن فورك رحمه الله. ومنهم من قال يجوز أن يعلم الولي أنه ولي [...], فيجوز أن يكون هذا الولي حُصَّ بكرامة هي تعريف الحق إياه أنه مأمون العاقبة. إذ القول بجواز كرامات الأولياء واجب. وهو وإن فارق خوف العاقبة فما هو عليه من الهيبة والتعظيم والإجلال في الحال أتم وأشد. فإن اليسير من التعظيم والهيبة أهدأ للقلوب من كثير من الخوف. ولما قال صلى الله عليه وسلم، "عشرة في الجنة من أصحابي"، فالعشرة لا محالة صدّقوا الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم وعرفوا سلامة عاقبتهم، ثم لم يقدح ذلك في حالهم [...]. وإلى هذا القول كان يذهب من شيوخنا الذين لقيناهم الأستاذ أبو علي الدقاق رحمه الله.⁵⁷

Then, in the section on miraculous gifts he writes:

واختلف أهل الحق في الولي هل يجوز أن يعلم أنه ولي أم لا. فكان الإمام أبو بكر بن فورك رحمه الله يقول لا يجوز ذلك لأنه يسلبه الخوف ويوجب له الأمن. وكان الأستاذ أبو علي الدقاق رحمه الله يقول بجوازه، وهو الذي نوّره

ونقول به. وليس ذلك بواجب في جميع الأولياء، حتى يكون كل ولي يعلم أنه ولي واجباً. ولكن يجوز أن يعلم بعضهم، كما يجوز أن لا يعلمه بعضهم. فإذا علم بعضهم أنه ولي كانت معرفته تلك كرامة له انفرد بها. وليس كل كرامة لولي يجب أن تكون بعينها لجميع الأولياء. [...] ولا على الولي أيضاً العلم بأنه ولي. والعشرة من الصحابة صدّقوا الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم فيما أخبرهم به أنهم من أهل الجنة. وقول من قال لا يجوز ذلك لأنه يخرجهم من الخوف، فلا بأس أن يخافوا تغيير العاقبة، والذي يجدونه في قلوبهم من الهيبة والتعظيم والإجلال للحق سبحانه يزيد ويربو على كثير من الخوف.⁵⁸

Al-Qushayrī refers to a debate concerning whether or not God may grant some individuals knowledge of their status as His elect dedicatees. Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015), a teacher of al-Qushayrī, rejects this possibility as it would undermine the principle of fear that underpins religious practice, while Abū ‘Alī al-Daqqāq (d. 412/1021), al-Qushayrī’s principal teacher in Sufism and father-in-law, accepts it. Al-Qushayrī favours al-Daqqāq’s position, since the venerative awe and recognition of God’s majesty that overwhelms the dedicatee’s heart will exceed the fear ordinarily experienced by the believer. He cites the case of the ten companions as a supportive example.

We find a shorter discussion on the same question in al-Makkī’s *Nihāyat al-marām*:

قال القاضي والإمام ابن فورك رحمهما الله إن الولي لا يعلم كونه ولياً. وقال بعض المشائخ لا يمتنع أن يكون من كرامة الولي أن يعلم أنه ولي وأنه من أهل الجنة. قال شيخنا الإمام رحمه الله والذي يدل على صحة مذهب المشائخ قول الله تعالى "لهم البشرى في الحياة الدنيا والآخرة"، وهي الرؤيا الحسنة. والكرامة إنما⁵⁹ تقود صاحبها إلى الله تعالى ولا تحجبه⁶⁰ عنه.⁶¹

According to al-Makkī, both Ibn Fūrak and al-Bāqillānī deny that God’s dedicatee could know his special status. The contrary view is ascribed to an unnamed *shaykh*, most likely to be al-Qushayrī or al-Daqqāq, both of whom are cited

58 Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 2, 521.16–522.10.

59 MS: بما.

60 MS: تحجبها.

61 Al-Makkī’s *Nihāyat al-marām*, fol. 206^v.8–13.

elsewhere in al-Makkī's work.⁶² Al-Makkī also cites his teacher Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (*shaykhunā l-imām*) accepting the position of the unnamed *shaykh*, and maintaining that miraculous gifts do not obstruct one from God, but direct the dedicatee closer to Him. This question is not discussed in al-Anṣārī's *Ghunya*.

This first citation of the author's father thus indicates that he was either Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī or someone directly influenced by him, confirming our earlier assumption that he was likely to be either al-Qushayrī, his student al-Anṣārī, or the latter's student al-Makkī. It does not allow us, however, to narrow our scope further. Nor, for that matter, does a textual comparison of the different sources. For, on the one hand, both *Uṣūl al-dīn* and al-Qushayrī (i) refer to the distinction between fear and awe (implicit in al-Makkī's concluding assertion that "the miraculous gift draws its recipient towards God, rather than veils one from Him"), (ii) cite the evidence of the ten companions (al-Makkī does not), and (iii) exhibit slight consonance at one point (UD: *fa-l-'ashratu lā maḥālata ṣaddaqū l-rasūla ... wa-'arafū salāmata 'āqibatihim thumma lam yaqdaḥ dhālika fī hālihīm*; al-Qushayrī: *wa-qad bashshara rasūlu llāhi ... 'ashratan bi-l-jannati wa-ṣaddaqūhu wa-lam yadulla dhālika 'alā quṣūrīn fī ḥaqqihīm*). On the other hand, both *Uṣūl al-dīn* and al-Makkī (i) cite al-Bāqillānī (al-Qushayrī does not), and (ii) exhibit slight consonance in the manner the doctrine is introduced (UD: *lā yab'udu an yakūna min karāmati llāhi l-waliyya an*; al-Makkī: *lā yamtanī'u an yakūna min karāmati l-waliyyi an*). None of this tips the balance either way.

4.1.2 Repenting Forgotten Sins

Another citation appears in the chapter on repentance:

فصل ذكر الإمام والدي رضي الله عنه أن من شرائط التوبة أن يذكر ما سلف من الزلة ويندم عليه، فلو أسلف ذنباً ونسيه فتوبته على الجملة من ذنوبه وندمه على الجملة، وعزمه على أن لا يعود إلى ذنب ما لا يكون توبة عما⁶³ نسيه، وما دام ناسياً لا يكون مطالباً بالتوبة عما نسيه، ولكنه يلتقي الله وهو مطالب بتلك الزلة. وهذا كما لو كان للغير عليه دين فنسي هذا المدينون أو لم يقدر على أن يردّه⁶⁴، فهو في الحال غير مطالب مع النسيان أو مع الإعسار. ولكن يلتقي الله وهو مطالب بالتوبة من ذنب دون التوبة من ذنوب آخر، [وهي] صحيحة عندنا كما نبين. فأما

62 See the index of *Nihāyat al-marām*, 786 and 795.

63 MS: نسي؟

64 MS: إن دا؟

التوبة من جملة الذنوب من غير تذكر التفاصيل فغير صحيحة. وهذا جد ظاهر، لأن التوبة ندم، والندم إنما يتحقق إذا كان متذكرًا لما فعله حتى يتصور الندم على فعله. وقال القاضي إن لم يتذكر التفصيل يقول إن كان مني ذنب لم أعلمه ولا أتذكره فأنا تائب إلى الله. ولعله إنما قال هذا إذا علم أن له ذنوبًا ولكنه لا يتذكرها. فأما إذا لم يعلم لنفسه ذنبًا فالندم على ما لم يكن محال. فأما إذا علم له ذنبًا ولكنه لم يتعين له في التذكر فيمكن أن يندم على ما ارتكب من مخالفة المولى على الجملة مع العزم على أن لا يعود إلى المخالفة أصلاً. فكان جهة المخالفة تعينت وإن لم يتذكر عين الذنب.

والواجب أن نقول لو كان صدر منه الزنا مرارًا ولكنه لا يدرك أعدادها يتصور منه أن يتوب عن الزنا ويندم عليه على الجملة ويعزم على أن لا يعود إلى الزنا وإن لم يتذكر كل زنية علي التعين ولم يتذكر المزي بها أو لم يعرفها. ومن شرط في التوبة أن يتذكر كل زنية أو كل مرة من مرات شراب الخمر، فهو سد باب التوبة. ولو اعتقد المرء شيئًا حسنًا أو مباحًا وكان عندنا ذنبًا فلا يتصور في حقه وجوب الندم على ما يعتقد حسنًا. بل يجب عليه ترك ذلك المعتقد الفاسد.⁶⁵

The question is whether one can repent all past sins, in general, despite having forgotten some sins committed, considering that a condition of repentance is that one must recall and regret the sin committed. According to the author's father, because one can only repent sins remembered, one will bear responsibility, on the day of judgement, for sins forgotten and unrepented. For al-Bāqillānī, by contrast, one can repent all sins, in general, without remembering each individually.⁶⁶ In this case, the author, or his father, explains, one would repent the global sin of disobedience, which the repentant sinner would no doubt cognise, as opposed to individual instances or types of sin. The author, or his father, goes on to qualify his own position by contending that the sinner is only obligated to recall all *types* of sin committed, as to obligate one to recall all instances of sin would effectively preclude repentance altogether.

There is nothing on this problem in al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*, the abridgement of the *Shāmīl*,⁶⁷ or *Uṣūl al-dīn* by his student al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī, nor in the works of al-Juwaynī's contemporaries, al-Mutawallī's *Mughnī* and Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī's (d. 476/1083) *Ishāra*. Al-Qushayrī, similarly, does not discuss this problem in

65 *Uṣūl*, fols 207^r.12–207^v.9.

66 This problem is not discussed in al-Bāqillānī's extant works.

67 See n. 13 above.

either the *Risāla*, where he briefly summarises the theologians' conception of repentance, his short epistle on repentance, or his creedal texts, the *Luma'* and the *Fuṣūl*.⁶⁸

We find, however, a discussion in al-Anṣārī's *Ghunya*, and an almost identical discussion by al-Makkī, who writes:

مسألة قال القاضي رحمه الله المذنب لا يخلو إما أن أصاب ذنباً واحداً أو ذنباً كثيرة محصورة هو ذاك لها أو ذاك للبعض ساهياً للبعض، وإما أن تكون له ذنوب منها ما يعلم قبحه وكونه معصية ومنها ما يعتقد حسناً وطاعة أو يعتقد مباحاً، كذنوب أهل الأهواء والخوارج وغيرهم وكل فرقة من فرق الأمة التي أخطأت في مذاهبهم وظنوها حقاً، وقل من يسلم عن ذلك. ثم قال المصيب للذنب الواحد أو الذنوب عالمًا بها وذاكرًا لها على التفصيل أو الجملة فإنه يجب عليه أن يتوب عن جميعها على التفصيل أو الجملة، فيقول إن كان مني ذنب لم أعلمه فأنا تائب إلى الله تعالى منه ومستغفر من عقابه. ولا يجب عليه التوبة مما لا يعلمه أو علمه ولا يعتقد ذنباً أو لم يخطر له بالبال، بل يستغفر في الجملة. ولا يجب على الله تعالى أن يذكره ما نسيه خلافاً لبعض القدرية. وإن كان ذاكرًا للذنوب فتصح منه التوبة من البعض دون البعض. وإن كان عالمًا بأحاديها وجبت التوبة عن أحاديها على التفصيل ولا تكفيه توبة واحدة. وتجاوز التوبة من قبيح مع المقام على مثله إذا اعتقده حسناً، كتوبة الخوارج والروافض من شرب الخمر مثلاً مع المقام على اعتقادهم.⁶⁹

Thus, both al-Anṣārī and al-Makkī only provide a fuller account of al-Bāqillānī's position, without expressing the opinion that the author of *Uṣūl al-dīn* attributes to his father. Though confirming their interest in the problem, this nonetheless does not offer further clues concerning the father's identity.

4.1.3 Recommitting Repented Sins

The final citation appears in a discussion concerning the validity of an act of repentance if the repenter goes on to recommit the sin repented:

68 Al-Qushayrī, *Mukhtaṣar*; Frank (ed. and trans.), "Two Short Dogmatic Works".

69 Al-Makkī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, fols 154^r.12–154^v.5; cf. al-Anṣārī's *Ghunya*, fols 239^v.13–240^r.1.

[1] فصل من تاب وصحت توبته ثم عاود الذنب فالتوبة الماضية صحيحة. فإن ما مضى من العبادة على الصحة لم يقدح في صحتها ما يقع بعد مضيتها. فعلى معاود الذنب تجديد التوبة. ثم هذه التوبة عبادة أخرى سوى التي سبقت. [2] وحكي الإمام والذي من كلام القاضي أن توبته الأخرى انتقضت حتى يلقي الله مؤاخذاً بحكم الزلة الأولى التي تاب عنها. واختار ما قدمناه أن التوبة الماضية صحيحة. قال وهذا كمن ترك صلاة ثم قضاها ثم صلاة أخرى [ى]، فالأولى التي قضاها لا يطالب بحكمها ثانياً.⁷⁰

Part 1, paraphrased from al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*, confirms the validity of such repentance; for, as an act of worship, it cannot be affected by subsequent sins.⁷¹ The author's father then reports al-Bāqillānī's position that recommitting a repented sin nullifies the prior act of repentance, but then favours al-Juwaynī's position. In support, he gives the analogy of one who fails to perform a prayer during its prescribed time, "makes up for" it by performing it later, then misses another prayer afterwards: the latter omission does not affect the validity of the rectification of the prior omission.

Al-Qushayrī does not touch on this problem in his extant works, including the *Risāla* and the epistle on repentance. Al-Anṣārī only paraphrases the *Irshād*, and is followed closely by al-Makkī.⁷² Neither refer to al-Bāqillānī or propose an analogy with missed prayers. No light, unfortunately, is shed here on the father's identity.

4.2 *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*

The first citation of the author's father confirms that he was either Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī or someone directly influenced by him, as indeed is true of al-Anṣārī and al-Makkī.⁷³ The second and third citations appear to draw on a written source, probably dedicated to repentance. Neither al-Anṣārī nor al-Makkī are reported to have written such a book, while al-Qushayrī does not touch on the questions discussed in these two citations in his *Risāla* or epistle on repentance.

⁷⁰ *Uṣūl*, fols 210^r.21–210^v.3.

⁷¹ Cf. al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 409.7–11.

⁷² Al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, fol. 240^v.5–7; al-Makkī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, fols 154^v.19–155^r.1.

⁷³ On evidence of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī's influence on al-Makkī, see my introduction to the facsimile edition of his *Nihāyat al-marām*.

Let us consider each of the three possible authors in turn. Of our three candidates, Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Anṣārī, firstly, appears the least compelling. He would be expected to make more frequent and more substantial references to his father and teacher, Abū l-Qāsim. For though the latter is much less original a thinker than al-Juwaynī, he was nonetheless a very adroit theologian and became the most respected representative of eastern Ashʿarism following his teacher's death. His student al-Makkī cites him frequently and draws closely on the *Ghunya* and occasionally on a commentary he wrote on the Qurʾān.⁷⁴ That *Uṣūl al-dīn* makes only three references to the author's father, all relating to relatively marginal theological questions, suggests that it is unlikely to have been written by Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī's son, whom we would expect to show much greater acknowledgement of, and deference to, his authority.

Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī is a more eligible candidate. The themes of the three foregoing citations, miraculous gifts and repentance, are consistent with the Sufi interests of his father Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, who is not reported to have written any major general *kalām* works and thus, in contrast to Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī, is less likely to be cited on core theological subjects. Abū Naṣr was also a student of al-Juwaynī, and would naturally be influenced by his works. Yet, contrary to what one would expect had he been the author, the text contains no sign of personal contact with al-Juwaynī, such as oral citations or references to him as “our *shaykh*”, as we see, for instance, in al-Anṣārī's *Ghunya*. Considering both the extent of the book's dependence on two of al-Juwaynī's works and the author's references to his father, the complete absence of such evidence of personal contact with al-Juwaynī is conspicuous and telling.

What is more, it will be recalled that the author of *Uṣūl al-dīn* makes a reference to an earlier Ashʿarī who was reportedly influenced by the main Bahshamī proof for the existence of God, and that Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī may be the theologian intended.⁷⁵ The text refers to him as “one of our school members”, which is clearly not how Abū Naṣr would have referred to his father.

There are no extant theological works by Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī against which our text can be checked and authenticated.⁷⁶ We are, however, fortunate to have excerpts—which, to my knowledge, have so far remained unnoticed—from one of his theological works in the monumental commentary written

74 Al-Anṣārī is also referred to reverentially by his other student al-Shahrastānī (*Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 38.15–16; *idem*, *Mafātīḥ al-asrār*, 1, 5.10; for a correction to the passage in which Abū l-Qāsim is mentioned in the latter edition, see my review of Tobias Mayer (trans.), *Keys to the Arcana*, 194–96).

75 See p. 45 above.

76 Brockelmann (*GAL*, I, 432) lists manuscript copies of two texts attributed to Abū Naṣr, both on Sufism.

by the much later figure Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791) on al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. Entitled *al-Tadhkira al-Sharqiyya*,⁷⁷ the work cited is described by al-Zabīdī as a short theological tract comparable in length and level of exposition to al-Juwaynī's *Luma'* and al-Ghazālī's *al-Risāla al-Qudsiyya*.⁷⁸ Overall, the contents of the citations contain nothing that was not already present in al-Juwaynī's works or current in the wider mainstream Ash'arī tradition of the period.⁷⁹ Some citations, however, betray a pointed polemical and rhetorical quality that is at its most acute in the following passage, which concludes a lengthy citation defending deanthropomorphic interpretations of verses suggestive of God "settling (*istiwā*) on His throne" and similar verses and *ḥadīths*. Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī writes:

A group of rabble (*ra'ā'*) have emerged, with whose mention I would not have tarnished the present work had it not been for the manner in which they have been leading common people (*al-awāmm*) astray by means of what the minds of [common people] are able to grasp and their imagination can visualise. They say, "We affirm the *prima facie* meaning (*al-zāhir*) and interpret those verses that suggest similarity (*tashbīh*) [between God and creatures] and those reports that imply [that God has] a boundary or an organ in accordance with their *prima facie* meanings; it is impermissible to interpret any of them figuratively (*ta'wīl*)". As evidence, they cite the saying of God, exalted, "Only God knows its interpretation" [Q. 3:7].

Those people—by He who holds our souls in His hand!—are more harmful to Islam than Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and idol-worshippers! For the heinous errors of the unbelievers are unmistakable and avoided by Muslims, while those people approach religion and common people in a way that deceives the weak-minded. So they propagate those innovations among their supporters, and have made it permissible in their hearts to ascribe to Him who is worshipped, praised be He, organs, limbs, riding, descending, leaning, lying down, being in His essence seated [on the throne], and moving from one spatial position to another. One who listens to the *prima facie* senses [which they affirm] will immediately

77 This title appears in eight references in the published edition of al-Zabīdī's book. However, in the introduction, it is referred to as *al-Tadhkira al-Qushayriyya (Ithāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, 2, 2.14).

78 Al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, 2, 16.

79 The citations (al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, 2, 108.31–109.9; 2, 127.32–128.3; 2, 141.6–7; 2, 143.24–29; 2, 152.8–20; 2, 185.12–15) bear no significant consonance with parallel passages in *Uṣūl al-dīn* (respectively, fols 65^r ff.; 42^r.6–43^r.19; 43^v.27–44^v.24; 44^v.24–46^r.1; 52^r.36–53^v.22; 136^r.16–140^r.30; cf. al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 155 ff.; 52 ff.; 63 ff.; 72 ff.; 119 ff.; 273 ff.).

begin to visualise sensible things in his imagination, and will have abominations (*faḍā'ih*) for beliefs! He will drift downstream, heedless of what has befallen him.⁸⁰

The unusual vehemence of this attack concurs with Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī's involvement in the conflict that erupted between Ash'arīs and Ḥanbalīs in Baghdad, when in 469/1077 he visited the city and began to teach at the Nizāmiyya and to preach against the anthropomorphism of his Ḥanbalī adversaries. As a result, he was summoned to Isfahan by the vizier Nizām al-Mulk, from where he was then sent back to his native Nishapur.⁸¹ That the *Tadhkira*, as is often the case with such short theological tracts, may have been dedicated to a powerful individual and intended to influence his stance towards the Ḥanbalīs and the Ash'arīs may explain its overly harsh tone. Notwithstanding, one would still expect to find echoes of this polemical rhetoric in the much larger *Uṣūl al-dīn* had it been authored by Abū Naṣr (which almost certainly would have been after his return to Nishapur). There are, however, no such echoes in the corresponding discussion, which draws heavily on Ibn Fūrak's *Mushkil al-ḥadīth* and contains a comparatively-restrained standard criticism of anthropomorphism.⁸² This contrast provides further confirmation that Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī is unlikely to be the author of *Uṣūl al-dīn*.

This leaves us with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, for whom, to my mind, a case can be made as the most likely author of the book. His father, al-Makkī, was a theologian of some significance, but neither outstandingly original nor prominent in his own right. Al-Rāzī refers to him with much respect, in some cases as *al-imām wālidī*, *al-imām al-sa'īd wālidī*, and *al-shaykh al-imām al-wālid*.⁸³ For instance, in one passage in his heresiographical work *al-Riyāḍ al-mūniqa*, where he outlines the main representatives of the Ash'arī school, naming al-Anṣārī as an eminent student of al-Juwaynī, and al-Makkī as a notable student of al-Anṣārī, he writes:

80 Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī, *al-Tadhkira al-Sharqiyya*, in al-Zabīdī, *Iṭḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, 2, 109.1–9.

81 On this conflict, see: Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqīl*, 350–66; Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 155; Holtzman. "The *Miḥna* of Ibn 'Aqīl"; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 16, 181–83; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 3, 207–8.

82 *Uṣūl*, fol. 65^r.1–93^v.3; cf. Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, 16 ff.

83 "Felicitous" (*sa'īd*) here is akin to *marḥūm*. The passages in which al-Rāzī refers to his father are collected in my introduction to al-Makkī's *Nihāyat al-marām* (Arabic introduction, 65–74).

My father and *shaykh*, the imām Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Makkī. He is the one from whose two oceans⁸⁴ I drank, with whose lights I was guided, and from whose knowledge I benefited. As well as being my father by birth, may God's mercy be upon him, he was equally my father in education (*ifāda*). May God reward him and all the imāms of Islam well.⁸⁵

Earlier in the same passage, al-Juwaynī is praised as having reached “a high status and great rank in both rational and scriptural disciplines”, and his *Shāmīl* is described as a monumental work of *kalām*. Al-Anṣārī too is described as having written “well-known” works of *kalām*. It is instructive that, in contrast, al-Rāzī only expresses filial gratitude to his father, neither praising his theological output nor naming any of his book titles, which indicates that he is aware that al-Makkī essentially represented Juwaynian theology and that he does not attempt to exaggerate his significance. This is confirmed by the infrequency of references to al-Makkī even in al-Rāzī's earliest confirmed theological work, the *Ishāra*, which contains only three citations.⁸⁶ Though these do not overlap with the foregoing citations in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, the two books nevertheless exhibit some congruence insofar as they contain only infrequent and minor references to the author's father. Aside from *Nihāyat al-marām*, al-Rāzī had access to other works by his father, perhaps including the source of the last two citations in *Uṣūl al-dīn*.⁸⁷

A further, important piece of evidence is, of course, the author's name appearing in a later hand on the title page. In the absence of an easily discernible Rāzian character in the style or contents of the text, this attribution was most likely based on the original title page, now lost, although we should not exclude the possibility that it could be a mere guess based on the Ash'arī nature of the text and the date of the copy.

Now, the text at hand, which belongs squarely to the classical Ash'arī tradition, differs markedly from al-Rāzī's confirmed *kalām* texts, including two of the earliest, the *Ishāra* and *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, not only in terms of contents, organisation and doctrines defended, but also in that it displays a much undeveloped acquaintance and engagement with the philosophical tradition. This, I propose, indicates that it could be one of the earliest theological texts written by al-Rāzī, dating considerably earlier than the *terminus ante quem* of 582/1186,

84 Probably, theology and jurisprudence, or knowledge and fatherhood.

85 Al-Rāzī, *Al-Riyāḍ al-mūniqa*, 184.1–4.

86 Al-Rāzī, *Ishāra*, 225.3; 281.7; 328.4.

87 In the *Ishāra* (328.5), al-Rāzī ascribes to al-Makkī books dedicated to the doctrine of the prophets' immunity from error. See also my introduction to *Nihāyat al-marām*, xiii.

the year in which the copy was completed. Al-Rāzī tells us that he began his theological study under the instruction of his father, whose *Nihāyat al-marām* is based closely on the *Ghunya* of his teacher Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī and, in turn, on al-Juwaynī's teachings. And indeed *Uṣūl al-dīn* belongs to the same family line of these two theological texts, considering its overall Juwaynian character and minor Qushayrian elements. Al-Juwaynī's *Shāmil* was, of course, at the heart of al-Rāzī's theological study; and he is even reported to have "committed it to memory" at a young age.⁸⁸ (No one actually memorised a book like the *Shāmil*; what is meant by *ḥifẓ* here, as al-Subkī explains in another context, is to achieve an in-depth understanding of the contents of a text and to be able to call them to mind.⁸⁹) The extent of the Juwaynian influence on his early career is such that even when he wrote his *kalām* summa *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, itself no less monumental than the *Shāmil*, he announces his intention to write "our commentary on *Kitāb al-Irshād*".⁹⁰ It is highly unlikely that he did write this commentary, which, to my knowledge, is not mentioned anywhere else.⁹¹

It appears therefore that al-Rāzī wrote *Uṣūl al-dīn* at a very early stage in his career, towards the end of his study of *kalām*, before studying philosophy and progressing to write works that display more independent and critical thinking. His planned commentary on the *Irshād* underscores an interest that may have manifested earlier in the form of an expansion of al-Juwaynī's book, drawing on other key sources, by which he may have intended to consolidate his theological learning. Al-Rāzī was born in 544/1150, and his earliest confirmed *kalām* book was written before 576/1181, and refers to earlier works.⁹² In 576/1180–1, he completed the *Maḥṣūl*, a mature book on juristic theory.⁹³ I would therefore date *Uṣūl al-dīn* circa 565/1170.⁹⁴

Appendix

The following are the main headings in the text, alongside folio numbers and the page numbers of corresponding discussions in al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*.

88 Al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 4, 249.

89 Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 5, 185.

90 Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, fol. 148^v.13.

91 According to Kātib Ḥelebī (*Kaṣḥf al-zunūn*, 2, 1561), al-Rāzī's *al-Maʿālim fī uṣūl al-dīn* was based on al-Juwaynī's short *Lumaʿ al-adilla*. However, I have found no clear evidence to corroborate this.

92 The date of MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Köprülü, 519, the earliest copy of the *Ishāra*. A text on the afterlife is mentioned on *Ishāra*, 336.12.

93 Al-Rāzī, *Maḥṣūl*, 1, 48.2 (editor's introduction).

94 I am grateful to Jan Thiele for his comments on this paper.

أصول الدين الإرشاد

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1	—	[المقدمة]
3	—	[في أحكام النظر]
3	2 ^r	فصل في حد النظر
3	2 ^r	مسألة إثبات النظر
6	6 ^v	فصل إذا تم النظر فقد تطرأ غفلة أو غشية أو موت فلا يحصل العلم ...
7	6 ^v	فصل النظر الصحيح يتضمن العلم
—	7 ^r	فصل أول الواجبات على البالغ العاقل عند أبي الحسن رضي الله عنه العلم بالله
5	7 ^r	فصل في أضداد النظر
8	7 ^v	فصل النظر المؤدي إلى معرفة حدوث العالم وثبوت الصانع واجب
12	<i>miss. fols</i>	[باب حقيقة العلم]
13	8 ^r	فصل العلم على قسمين ... قديم ... وحادث
13	8 ^v	فصل قال أئمتنا في العلوم ما هو مكتسب لنا
—	9 ^r	فصل العلم بالله تعالى اليوم نظري
14	9 ^r	فصل العلم الضروري في العادة يتولى ولا يتأتى
—	9 ^v	فصل قال الأستاذ أبو إسحق يجوز أن يكتسب العلم بطريق آخر سوى النظر
14	10 ^r	فصل للعلم أضداد
15	10 ^r	فصل في العقل
17	12 ^v	القول في حدث العالم
—	13 ^r	مسألة الجزء
—	15 ^v	مسألة في أن المعدوم ليس بشيء
—	16 ^r	مسألة لا يصح أن يتعلق بفاعل محدث ...
—	18 ^r	فصل المعدوم قد يعلم على معنى أن انتفاءه معلوم
—	18 ^v	فصل المعدومات خمسة أقسام

(cont.)

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الأصل الثاني إثبات حدوث الأعراض	19 ^v 20
الأصل الثالث بيان استحالة خلو الجواهر عن الأعراض	20 ^v 22
الأصل الرابع بيان استحالة القول بحدوث لا أول لها	21 ^v 25
وما استدل به الأئمة وشيخنا أبو الحسن رضي الله عنه في حدوث الجواهر	22 ^v —
شبه القائلين بقدّم العلم	23 ^r —
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فصل في نفي الجهة عن البارئ تعالى	35 ^v 39
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فصل في استحالة كونه جوهرًا والرد على النصارى	40 ^r 46
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78	46 ^r فصل في كون الرب تعالى باقياً
79	46 ^r فصل في إثبات الصفات لله تعالى
80	46 ^r الكلام في الأحوال
84	46 ^v تعليل الواجب
94	49 ^r فصل ثبت أن الرب تعالى يريد بإرادة قديمة عندنا
94	49 ^v فصل قال جهنم إذا خلق الرب شيئاً خلق لنفسه علماً
99	49 ^v فصل قد بينا أن الرب تعالى متكلم
102	50 ^r حقيقة الكلام
104	50 ^r فصل في إثبات كلام النفس
109	50 ^v فصل في قدم كلام الرب تعالى
128	53 ^v فصل في إبطال قول من يقول كلام الله القديم حروف وأصوات
130	54 ^r فصل في الفرق بين القراءة والمقروء
132	54 ^r فصل كلام الله محفوظ في قلوبنا...
133	54 ^r فصل كلام الله مسموع
135	54 ^v فصل كلام الله منزل
136	54 ^v فصل في أن كلام الرب تعالى واحد متعلق بجميع المتعلقات
—	55 ^r فصل قال معظم أئمتنا لا يقال كلام الله محكي
—	55 ^r فصل كلام الله صدق
137	55 ^r فصل لا يقال صفات الله تعالى مغايرة لذاته
—	55 ^v فصل صفات ذات البارئ وهي... قائمة بذاته
138	55 ^v الباقي
—	56 ^r فصل في أنه لا يقال لم يزل الله تعالى خالقاً
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143	57 ^r فصل ما ورد الشرع بإطلاقه في أسماء الله تعالى وصفاته أطلقناه
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العنوان

أصول الدين الإرشاد

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364	166 ^v	فصل في الأرزاق
367	167 ^v	فصل في الأسعار
368	168 ^r	فصل في الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر
368	168 ^v	فصل أحكام الشرع منقسمة إلى ما يستوي فيه الخواص والعوام ...
—	169 ^r	فصل الأولى لمن يتصدى الأمر بالمعروف ... أن يبدأ بنفسه
—	169 ^v	فصل الأمر بالمعروف فرض كفاية
—	169 ^v	فصل ليس الأمر بالمعروف البحث واقتحام الدور بالظنون ...
—	169 ^v	فصل ينبغي للأمر بالمعروف أن يأمر فيبدأ بالأخف
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375	174 ^v	القول في سؤال القبر
377	178 ^v	فصل في معنى الروح
377	180 ^r	فصل في أن الجنة والنار مخلوقتان
379	181 ^v	فصل في ذكر الصراط ووزن الأعمال والحوض
—	182 ^v	فصل في المعراج
381	183 ^r	القول في الثواب والعقاب وإحباط الأعمال والرد على المعتزلة ... في الوعد والوعيد
385	184 ^v	فصل مذهب الخوارج والمعتزلة أن من ارتكب ذنباً ولم يتب حبط عمله ويخلد في النار
—	190 ^v	فصل المعاصي كلها كبائر
389	191 ^v	فصل صار معظم المعتزلة إلى أن الكبيرة الواحدة تحبط جميع الطاعات
391	193 ^r	فصل في الصغائر والكبائر
393	193 ^r	فصل في الشفاعة
396	196 ^r	القول في الأسماء والأحكام
396	196 ^r	ذكر حقيقة الإيمان
400	201 ^v	فصل قال المتقدمون من أئمتنا شرط الإيمان الحقيقي أن يوافي ربه به ...
—	202 ^v	فصل من قال الإيمان جميع الطاعات قال لا فرق بين الإيمان والإسلام

(cont.)

أصول الدين الإرشاد

العنوان

—	202 ^v	القول في الكفار المتأولين
401	204 ^r	القول في التوبة
404	205 ^v	فصل التوبة واجبة على كل من فارق ذنباً
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—	207 ^v	فصل توبة العاجز صحيحة
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409	210 ^r	فصل من ندم على ذنب وصحت توبته ثم تذكر تلك السيئة...
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410	210 ^v	القول في الإمامة
—	212 ^r	فصل قال جمهور العلماء يجب نصب إمام في كل وقت
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—	214 ^r	فصل فإن قيل نص على علي...
—	218 ^v	فصل في نفي شرط العصمة عن الإمام
425	219 ^v	فصل من انعقدت له الإمامة باختيار الأمة أو بعضهم فلا يجوز خلعه
424	220 ^r	فصل فيما تنعقد به الإمامة
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426	221 ^v	فصل في شرائط الإمامة
430	222 ^v	فصل في إمامة المفضول
—	223 ^r	فصل للإمام أن يعهد إلى من يقوم بعده بالإمامة
—	223 ^r	فصل لا يجب على كل أحد معرفة الإمام
—	223 ^v	فصل في إمامة أبي بكر الصديق
—	229 ^v	فصل في إمامة عمر رضي الله عنه
—	230 ^v	فصل في إمامة عثمان رضي الله عنه
—	233 ^v	فصل في إمامة علي رضي الله عنه

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Postscript: A New Copy of Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Makkī’s *Nihāyat al-marām*

Several years ago, I identified a manuscript located in Hyderabad as an autograph copy of the second volume of Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Makkī’s *Nihāyat al-marām fī dirāyat al-kalām*, and I then published it in facsimile (p. 36 above). Just as I received the proofs of the present paper, I was fortunate enough to find a further copy of the second volume of the work—MS Damascus, Ṣāḥiriyya 9883—a photographic reproduction of which is available at the Jumʿa al-Mājid Center for Culture and Heritage in Dubai. Comprising 376 folios, the copy is transcribed in an elegant *naskh* by a professional scribe, and dated in the colophon to 5 Dhū l-Ḥijja 561 (2 October 1166) (fol. 376a). The scribe’s name and location are not given. This manuscript was evidently copied from the Hyderabad manuscript, as the marginal edits and additions made in the author’s hand in the latter manuscript are incorporated into the body-text in the former.

The reproduction of the title page (fol. 1a) is unfortunately of such poor quality that the text is only partially legible; but the legible parts of the name and title match those found in the Hyderabad manuscript. The only significant difference is that the author’s name is followed by the prayer *nawwara llāh ḍarīḥahu*, confirming that the author was not alive when the copy was completed. The flyleaf (fol. i) contains various ownership notes and seals by Damascene figures, including ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ghazzī al-ʿĀmirī (d. 1143/1730), Aḥmad al-Ḥarastī (d. 1164/1751) and descendants of the famous ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731). A note on the recto identifies the copy as the third volume of the book, which is most probably an error, as Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1369) reports that he came across a copy of the *Nihāya* and that it was a two-volume work (see my introduction to the facsimile edition, x). The copy referred to by al-Subkī, who was himself based in Damascus, is most likely this same copy. A copy of the first volume of the *Nihāya* is yet to be found.

Le commentaire à la sūrate *al-A'lā* attribué à Avicenne

Une épître de *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*

Meryem Sebti

Avicenne a laissé une œuvre considérable, qui a exercé une influence décisive tant sur les philosophes que sur les théologiens postérieurs. Son corpus philosophique, outre ses œuvres majeures tels le *Kitāb al-Shifā'*, le *Kitāb al-Najāt*, le *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, le *Daneshnāme-ye 'Alā'ī*, la *Risāla al-aḍḥawīyya fī amr al-ma'ād*, etc., est constitué d'une multitude de traités et d'épîtres ainsi que de quelques courts commentaires à Aristote¹. Parmi les traités et épîtres attribués à Avicenne, Y. Mahdavi, dans sa *Bibliographie d'Ibn Sina*², en dénombre 110 qui sont vraisemblablement des pseudépigraphes³. Si certaines attributions sont manifestement infondées, comme le relève avec raison le savant iranien, cela ne signifie pas que tous les traités considérés comme authentiques par Mahdavi et par l'autre bibliographe d'Avicenne, le père Anawati⁴, le soient. Un travail important reste à effectuer sur le corpus avicennien afin de l'épurer des pseudépigraphes.

Dans le cadre d'un projet d'édition critique et de traduction des exégèses consacrées par Avicenne à cinq sourates du Coran⁵, j'ai étudié son commentaire à la sourate *al-A'lā* (« Le Très-Haut »). Ce commentaire est attribué à

1 Avicenne a commenté la *Métaphysique Lambda* et le *De anima*. Il a également commenté la *Théologie*, indûment attribuée au Stagirite alors qu'il s'agit d'une réécriture des trois dernières Ennéades de Plotin.

2 Yahyā Mahdavi, *Bibliographie d'Ibn Sina*.

3 Ces épîtres sont classées par Y. Mahdavi dans une rubrique à part intitulée *maskūk*, *Bibliographie d'Ibn Sina*, 259–304.

4 Georges C. Anawati, *Essai de bibliographie avicennienne*.

5 La description des mss des commentaires consacrés par Avicenne au Coran se trouve dans Mahdavi, *Bibliographie d'Ibn Sina*, 64–66 ; celle du commentaire à la sourate *al-A'lā* se trouve à la page 66. Hormis le commentaire à la sūrat *al-A'lā*, Avicenne aurait commenté la sourate 114 (*al-Nās*, Les hommes) ; la sourate 113 (*al-Falaq*, Le point du jour) ; la sourate 112 (*al-Ikhlās*, La religion foncière) ; le verset 11 (*thumma istawā ilā l-samā'*, Puis il se tourna vers le ciel) de la sourate 41 (*Fuṣṣilat*, Les versets clairement exposés) ; le verset 35 (Dieu est la lumière des cieux et de la terre) de la sourate 24 (*al-Nūr*, La lumière). Sur le commentaire de la sourate *al-Ikhlās*, on peut consulter : Daniel de Smet et Meryem Sebti, « Avicenna's Philosophical Approach », 134–48.

Avicenne dans cinq manuscrits⁶. Il existe deux éditions de ce texte, l'une établie par Ḥasan 'Āṣī⁷ et l'autre par Ali Asghar Ḥikmat⁸. Aucun de ces auteurs ne remet en cause le fait qu'Avicenne soit l'auteur de ce commentaire.

La connotation ash'arite des doctrines développées dans ce *tafsīr* coranique m'a rapidement amenée à m'interroger sur la validité de l'attribution à Avicenne et à rechercher la paternité de ces doctrines chez les grands auteurs ash'arites. C'est chez Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, notamment dans son ouvrage *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya min al-ʿilm al-Ilāhī* (« Les hautes recherches de la science divine »), œuvre tardive et très marquée par l'influence des philosophes et notamment d'Avicenne, que j'ai trouvé des passages entiers de cette épître repris parfois mot à mot⁹. Des preuves externes irréfragables sont ensuite venues confirmer que cette épître est en réalité extraite de la *Risāla fī l-Tanbīh ʿalā baʿḍ al-asrār al-mūdaʿa fī baʿḍ suwar al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm* d'al-Rāzī, puisqu'au moins deux manuscrits très anciens (VIII^e siècle de l'hégire) attribuent ce texte à Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.

D'un point de vue méthodologique et dans le cadre d'une réflexion sur la question des pseudépigraphes dans le corpus avicennien, je souhaite montrer comment une étude minutieuse du contenu doctrinal d'un texte – dans le cas présent, il s'agit du commentaire d'une sourate du Coran – peut fortement contribuer à confirmer ou à infirmer l'attribution d'un écrit à son auteur présumé.

6 Mahdavi en recense trois : Istanbul (Üniversite 1548₅) ; Raz 1, 4/62 ; Téh (Majlis 1061₂₆), *Bibliographie d'Ibn Sina*, 66. Pour sa part, Anawati signale l'existence d'un autre ms : Mashhad, 3/22 (66), *Essai de bibliographie avicennienne*, 264. Dans l'édition qu'il fait de ce commentaire, Ali Asghar Ḥikmat précise que le numéro du ms de Mashhad est le 62 et non le 66 comme le note Anawati ; voir Ali Asghar Ḥikmat, *Le livre du Millénaire d'Avicenne*, 2 170. Ce dernier a établi son édition à partir du ms de Mashhad (daté 1205/1790). Dans mes notes, je me réfère à l'édition qu'a faite 'Āṣī de ce commentaire, qui est plus facilement accessible que celle d'Ali Asghar Ḥikmat. Cf. 'Āṣī, *al-Tafsīr al-qurʾānī*, 94–103.

7 'Āṣī, *al-Tafsīr al-qurʾānī*.

8 Voir *supra*, n. 6. Il existe également une traduction annotée de ce commentaire : Muḥammad 'Abdul Ḥaq, « Ibn Sina's interpretation of the Quran », 46–55. Il s'agit non pas d'une traduction littérale, mais d'une réécriture paraphrasée du texte, aussi élégante qu'orientée. L'auteur cherche en effet à prouver qu'Avicenne est un théosophe et un bon musulman dont les doctrines sont en accord avec celles de l'ash'arisme.

9 Al-Rāzī a également commenté la sourate *al-A'lā* dans son grand commentaire du Coran (*al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*), mais si on y trouve des similitudes certaines avec notre commentaire, il ne s'agit pas du même texte. Ce sont certains passages des *Maṭālib* qui sont rigoureusement identiques à notre commentaire.

Notre commentaire divise la sourate en trois parties : preuve de Dieu par Sa Création ; la figure du prophète ; l'eschatologie¹⁰. Cette division m'a permis de dégager quatre thèmes principaux autour desquels s'articule mon analyse doctrinale, à savoir, l'embryogenèse, la conception de la nature, la prophétie, l'eschatologie.

1 L'embryogenèse

L'auteur du commentaire affirme que la génération des animaux et des végétaux ne peut être due à la nature, mais seulement à un agent doté de volonté. L'argumentation qui fonde cette affirmation repose sur une embryogenèse qui ne correspond pas à celle qu'Avicenne développe dans ses ouvrages de science naturelle et de médecine comme nous allons le voir. Voici ce qu'on peut lire du processus de l'embryogenèse dans notre commentaire¹¹ :

Si l'on venait à objecter : pourquoi n'est-il pas possible que l'engendrement des animaux et des végétaux soit causé par la nature et non par l'Agent doté de volonté ? Nous répondons : la preuve en est que le corps de la semence fécondée est homogène par nature. Par ailleurs, l'effet qu'exerce la nature telles que les sphères célestes et les étoiles sur [ce corps] est homogène. Or, lorsqu'un corps homogène est affecté dans sa totalité par un effet homogène, il est exclu que soient engendrés à partir de lui des états distincts.

Ne vois-tu pas que lorsque qu'une bougie est placée [quelque part] et qu'elle éclaire l'un des côtés à une distance de cinq *adhru*¹², il est nécessaire qu'elle éclaire tous les autres côtés à cette même distance ? Qu'elle puisse éclairer l'un des côtés à une distance de cinq *adhru* et qu'elle n'éclaire l'autre côté qu'à un demi *dhirā* – sans qu'il n'y ait là ni obstacle

10 La division en trois de la sourate que l'on trouve dans notre commentaire ne se trouve pas dans les *tafāsīr* les plus anciens d'al-Ṭabarī (m. 310/923), al-Zamakhsharī (m. 538/1144) ou al-Huwwārī (m. ca. 290/903), mais on la trouve chez des commentateurs plus tardifs, comme chez le shī'ite Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī (m. 548/1153-4), *Majma' al-bayān fī 'ilm al-Qur'ān* et aussi chez Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (m. 606/1210) dans son *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*.

11 Ma traduction est basée sur une nouvelle édition de ce commentaire (à paraître). Le passage traduit ici correspond aux § 2–3–4 de l'édition 'Āṣī, *al-Tafsīr al-qur'ānī*, 97. Cette édition est très fautive et ne peut en aucun cas servir de base à une traduction fiable.

12 Unité de mesure qui varie selon les régions.

ni empêchement – c'est là une chose inconcevable ! Il est donc établi que les effets de la nature s'exercent nécessairement de façon homogène.

Lorsque nous constatons que les os sont engendrés à partir de certaines parties de la semence fécondée (*nutfa*), et que les nerfs, les veines et les ligaments sont engendrés à partir d'autres parties, nous savons que l'effet ne provient pas d'un agent qui agit par nature et par nécessité, mais d'un agent qui agit au moyen de son pouvoir et par choix délibéré.

Ce passage explique le développement de l'embryon à partir de la semence fécondée (*al-nutfa*). Cette semence, homogène dans ses parties, recevant une influence homogène des sphères célestes ne peut rendre raison à elle seule de l'engendrement d'organes différents. L'auteur fait donc appel à la volonté divine pour expliquer que, d'une nature homogène soumise à une influence homogène, des organes différents soient engendrés. Cette argumentation réduit les effets de la causalité naturelle au profit de la toute-puissance divine. Si l'on se réfère à l'embryogenèse telle qu'Avicenne la conçoit dans les *Ṭabī'yyāt* du *Shifā'*, on trouve la description d'un processus biologique différent de celui qui est esquissé dans notre commentaire.

Avicenne décrit comme suit le processus de l'embryogenèse : à partir de la rencontre de la semence de l'homme et de la femme dans l'utérus, ce dernier se referme sur lui-même pour ne pas laisser s'échapper ces semences. Puis, la semence s'épaissit en raison de la chaleur qui règne dans l'utérus où se trouve aussi enfermé le sang de la menstruation qui servira de nourriture à l'embryon. C'est alors que se constitue une membrane comme celle de l'œuf qui empêche la dispersion de la semence et du sang. Les conditions sont donc réunies pour que la matière puisse croître et augmenter. La première des choses qui se constitue est le pneuma, qui est nécessaire à la constitution des autres organes. L'origine de ce pneuma est ce qui, de la semence, a été reçu dans l'utérus et s'est mêlé à lui. Le lieu d'inhésion du pneuma, qui est comme son principe, est le cœur. Cette substance subtile ou spirituelle (appelée *nafsī* ou *rūhī*) se diffuse ensuite à travers les ouvertures qui correspondront aux veines :

Puis la qualité sanguine augmente dans la semence fécondée (*nutfa*) et diminue jusqu'à ce qu'elle devienne un caillot de sang (*'alaqa*) et le principe de cela est interne. Et l'épaisseur ainsi que l'union (*al-in'iqād*) se renforcent jusqu'à ce que s'achève un embryon (*mudgha*) grâce à une assistance variée. [...]. L'agent est donc le cœur avec sa puissance et le [principe] matériel, c'est la partie épaisse de la semence (*many*) accompagnée du sang le plus épais. Quant au cerveau, nécessairement, le pneuma se tourne vers lui et se concentre également en lui et sa substance est alors

créée. [...]. Étant donné qu'il n'est pas possible que le cerveau se constitue dans un lieu par hasard et selon une modalité due au hasard ; que le foie se constitue dans un lieu par hasard et selon une modalité due au hasard ; que le cœur se constitue dans un lieu par hasard et selon une modalité due au hasard, alors ceux-là sont créés selon ce qui est requis par le mouvement du pneuma en eux et par l'ouverture des réceptacles requis¹³.

Il est difficile de trouver une correspondance entre l'embryogenèse d'Avicenne et l'explication de la *nutfa* donnée dans notre commentaire. La constitution des différents organes n'est pas due pour Avicenne à une quelconque influence astrale, mais à un processus biologique complexe et nécessaire. On peut noter aussi que le texte parle de l'engendrement « des os, des nerfs, des ligaments et des veines », or il s'agit là selon l'embryogenèse du philosophe de membres dont la constitution est secondaire. Selon Avicenne, une fois qu'une mixtion parfaite est constituée après que les semences de la femme et de l'homme se sont rencontrées, le cœur est constitué. Il est le lieu d'origine de la génération du pneuma (*rūḥ*). Dès que l'âme s'attache au corps par l'intermédiaire du cœur, le corps est animé. Le cerveau, bien qu'il joue un rôle important dans l'embryogenèse – puisqu'il est le lieu où s'achève le développement du pneuma – souffle subtil qui permet de véhiculer les impulsions des nerfs vers les membres afin qu'ils puissent accomplir leurs actes – n'est pas ce à quoi s'attache l'âme en premier lieu. Seul le cœur est le principe à partir duquel se diffuse la vie à travers le reste du corps. De lui procède une faculté créatrice et génératrice qui permet au cerveau de se constituer. Le cœur est le principe originaire de toutes les puissances de l'âme, qu'elles soient digestive, imaginative, de représentation, de remémoration, bien que les actes de la première soient accomplis par le foie et ceux des trois autres par le cerveau. Mais ces organes ne dérivent pas tous du cœur, car d'autres organes sont créés après lui afin qu'il n'ait pas trop de « charge » (*thiqal*) à supporter. C'est pour la même raison qu'ont été créés les nerfs pour le cerveau et les veines pour le foie. Dans ce processus, c'est grâce à la diffusion du pneuma que le foie et le cerveau se constituent. Les puissances de l'âme circulent dans le corps, véhiculées par le pneuma dont la mixtion varie et s'adapte en fonction de la puissance qu'il véhicule. Ainsi, « la mixtion qui convient à l'irascibilité ne convient pas à celle de la concupiscence ou à celle de la sensation »¹⁴. Si la mixtion du pneuma ne variait pas, alors diverses puissances ne pourraient agir dans le corps.

13 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā', al-Ḥayawān*, 168. Tout le chapitre est extrêmement instructif pour ce qui est de l'embryogenèse.

14 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā', al-Nafs*, 232.

Notre commentaire semble quant à lui suggérer que rien hormis l'influence astrale ne justifie la constitution de membres différenciés issue d'une semence unique. Cette explication ne correspond pas à l'embryogenèse d'Avicenne dont j'ai exposé brièvement les grandes lignes.

Avicenne explique clairement que le développement de l'embryon est dû à un processus biologique qui est nécessité par la nature et par les puissances à l'œuvre dans ce processus :

Si l'on examine attentivement la thèse qui porte sur la constitution de la valériane à partir du blé – grâce à l'extension de la matière à partir de la terre – ou de celle de l'embryon à partir de la semence fécondée – grâce à l'extension de la matière dans l'utérus – et que l'on se demande si cela est dû au hasard, on trouve alors que cela n'est pas par hasard, *mais qu'il s'agit d'une chose nécessitée par la nature et requise par une puissance*¹⁵.

Dans le *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, Avicenne écrit aussi :

Examinons, concernant la semence, si elle contient ou non une partie de l'âme, je veux dire une puissance. *Puisque le mouvement de la semence afin de constituer l'embryon n'est pas due à une cause étrangère et extérieure, mais à la nature bien employée avec l'autorisation de Dieu le Très-Haut, alors [la semence] contient le principe de l'âme appétitive*¹⁶.

Ces passages montrent que pour Avicenne le développement de l'embryon est un procédé complexe et autonome, qui requiert le concours de plusieurs organes. Or, selon l'auteur de notre commentaire, non seulement c'est à partir de la seule semence fécondée que se constitue l'embryon¹⁷, mais ce processus loin d'être autonome, dépend de la volonté divine.

Dans les *Maṭālib al-ʿāliya min al-ʿilm al-Ilāhī*, al-Rāzī, après avoir déterminé la nature du sperme (*al-many*), affirme : « le Très Haut détermina (*qaddara*) dans Sa sagesse le fait que les parties terrestres et aquatiques qui se trouvent dans le sperme deviennent une matière pour les membres »¹⁸. Bien qu'il ne

15 Ibn Sīnā, *Shifāʾ*, *al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī*, 70 (je souligne).

16 Ibn Sīnā, *Shifāʾ*, *al-Ḥayawān*, 401 (je souligne).

17 On retrouve ici un écho de la sourate coranique « *wa-khalafa l-insān min al-nuṭfa* » (Q 16 :4). On recense douze occurrences du terme *nuṭfa* dans le Coran.

18 Al-Rāzī, dans la suite du texte, explique que le premier organe créé est le cœur. Il serait intéressant d'étudier l'évolution de la pensée d'al-Rāzī sur cette question. Il est également instructif de comparer l'embryogenèse d'al-Ghazālī à celle d'al-Rāzī. Voici ce qu'écrit le premier dans *Ihyāʾ ulūm al-dīn*, 4:111 : « Si nous racontons les merveilles de l'ouvrage de

soit pas question ici de semence fécondée (*nutfa*), comme dans notre texte, mais de sperme (*many*), la thèse énoncée est la même que celle esquissée dans notre commentaire.

2 La conception de la nature chez Avicenne

La description des effets de la nature exposée dans notre commentaire est très restrictive. Elle correspond aux mouvements naturels des corps simples qui, nécessairement, sont toujours les mêmes. Il est donc établi que les effets de la nature s'exercent nécessairement de façon homogène¹⁹.

Or, Avicenne développe une conception de la nature beaucoup plus complexe. Il distingue dans la *Physique* du *Shifā'*²⁰ plusieurs types d'activités et de mouvements. Il y a ceux qui sont dus à des causes extérieures à la chose mue, comme le bouillonnement de l'eau et le mouvement ascendant de la pierre, mais il y a également les mouvements qui proviennent des choses elles-mêmes sans recours à une cause externe, comme l'eau qui, chauffée, et laissée à elle-même, refroidit par nature (*bi-ṭibā'ihī*). Avicenne affirme ensuite qu'il se peut que, lorsque la graine se transforme en végétal et que les semences fécondées se transforment en animal, nous soyons alors dans ce cas de figure. Nous trouvons également dans cette catégorie les animaux qui accomplissent toutes sortes de mouvements au moyen de leur volonté alors que nous ne voyons rien qui, de l'extérieur, les contraint à de tels comportements. Ces mouvements et actions sont produits par essence et non par le fait d'une

Dieu le Très-Haut dans la création de l'utérus et de celle du sang de la menstruation et la composition de l'embryon à partir de la semence et du sang de la menstruation, et la manière dont se fait la création des testicules et des veines qui la traversent en venant de la colonne vertébrale, qui est le lieu dans lequel se fixe la semence fécondée (*al-nutfa*), et la manière dont le liquide de la femme se répand à partir de la poitrine par l'intermédiaire des veines, et la manière dont la cavité de l'utérus se divise en matrices où la semence dans certaines d'entre elles prend la forme du mâle et dans certaines autres la forme de la femelle, et aussi la manière dont la semence fécondée fait le tour des étapes de sa création, devenant embryon, caillot de sang, os, chair, sang, et aussi la manière dont ses parties se divisent en tête, main, pied, intérieur et extérieur et en tous les autres membres, alors [si l'on te racontait tout cela] s'achèverait pour toi toute la merveille des espèces de la providence de Dieu concernant le principe de ta création ». Par ailleurs, on peut également noter l'idée, absente chez Avicenne – présente dans le commentaire – selon laquelle la semence fécondée se divise en pieds, main ... L'absence du cœur et du pneuma essentiels dans le processus de l'embryogenèse chez Avicenne – et bien entendu, l'implication directe de Dieu dans ce processus chez al-Ghazālī.

19 'Āṣī, *al-Taḥṣīr al-qur'ānī*, 97.

20 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ṭabī'īyyāt, al-Samā' al-ṭabī'ī*, 29.

cause extérieure. Avicenne explique ensuite que par nature nous entendons plusieurs choses : le principe du mouvement simple et nécessaire de certains corps, mouvement qui ne requiert ni volonté ni puissance. Ce mouvement est appelé « naturel » (*ṭabīʿiyya*) ; le mouvement du soleil tel que l'ont déterminé les philosophes, c'est « l'âme céleste » (*naḥs falakīyya*) ; ensuite le mouvement des plantes quand elles se constituent et croissent, appelé « âme végétale » (*naḥs nabātīyya*) ; et le quatrième, qui est « l'âme animale » (*naḥs ḥayawānīyya*). Avicenne précise :

Parfois, on donne le nom de « nature » à toute puissance dont provient un acte dépourvu de volonté, et l'âme végétale est alors appelée « nature » ; et parfois aussi est appelée « nature » tout ce dont provient un acte dépourvu de réflexion et de choix, de sorte que l'araignée tisse sa toile par nature ainsi que les autres animaux qui lui ressemblent. Cependant, la nature par laquelle les corps naturels sont naturels et que nous souhaitons examiner ici est la nature au sens premier (*i.e.* la nature qui englobe les deux types de mouvements, nécessaires et par volonté)²¹.

Plus loin, il écrit : « En effet, la nature a une puissance qui traverse les corps et qui fournit les formes et la création (*al-ṣuwar wa-l-khalq*) ; elle est le principe de telle et telle chose »²². Parfois, la nature s'identifie avec la forme de la chose comme dans le cas des choses simples, telle l'eau : « la nature de l'eau est la quiddité même par laquelle l'eau est ce qu'elle est » explique-t-il²³ avant de poursuivre :

Dans les corps composés, la nature est quelque chose de la forme, mais elle n'est pas la forme elle-même (*kunh al-ṣūra*). Les corps composés ne sont pas ce qu'ils sont par leur puissance motrice par essence. [...] C'est comme si cette puissance était une partie de leur forme. C'est comme si leurs formes réunissaient une pluralité de notions qui s'unissaient, comme l'humanité, qui contient les puissances de la nature et les puissances de l'âme végétale et de l'animal ainsi que la rationalité. Et lorsque ces dernières se réunissent d'une certaine manière, elles donnent la quiddité humaine. Quant à la modalité de cette réunion, elle doit d'abord être démontrée dans la philosophie première. A moins que l'on entende par nature, non ce que nous venons de définir, mais tout ce dont procèdent

21 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ṭabīʿiyyāt, al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿi*, 30.

22 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ṭabīʿiyyāt, al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿi*, 31.

23 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ṭabīʿiyyāt, al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿi*, 34.

les actes de la chose et ce, quel que ce soit le mode évoqué ; selon la condition évoquée dans la Physique (*al-ṭabī'a*). Peut-être alors la nature de toute chose est-elle sa forme²⁴.

Avicenne conclut ce chapitre du *al-Samā' al-ṭabī'ī* en disant que dans les choses simples, la nature est la forme de la chose ; que dans les choses composées, on appelle « nature » la forme par synonymie. Quant au mouvement, « il est loin d'être la nature des choses »²⁵. La conception très restrictive de la nature évoquée dans le commentaire, ne correspond qu'à l'une des définitions de la nature chez Avicenne, à savoir celle des corps simples dont le mouvement est toujours identique par nature, sauf s'il est sous l'effet d'une influence extérieure. L'effet de la nature n'est pas – comme semble le dire le commentaire – toujours celui de la nécessité. Le mouvement de croissance des plantes, l'évolution de la semence fécondée en embryon, l'acte de se nourrir des animaux, tout cela relève de la « nature » chez Avicenne, mais pas, semble-t-il, dans notre commentaire. Pour conclure, si cette critique de la notion de nature est commune dans les textes ash'arites²⁶, elle est étrangère à la pensée d'Avicenne, qui, dans

24 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ṭabī'īyyāt, al-Samā' al-ṭabī'ī*, 35.

25 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ṭabī'īyyāt, al-Samā' al-ṭabī'ī*, 37.

26 Comme l'explique Gimaret, l'opposition que l'on trouve dans notre commentaire entre *ta'thīr mu'aththir bi-l-ṭab'* et *ta'thīr mu'aththir bi-l-qudra wa-l-ikhtiyār* est un thème courant dans la littérature ash'arite (Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-Aṣ'arī*, 406). Al-Ash'arī écrit : « Que la pierre se déplace quand on la pousse, qu'elle tombe quand on la lâche dans l'air ; [...] qu'il y ait gestation à la suite d'un coït, germination des céréales après labourage et semailles, combustion lors du contact avec le feu, déchirure et douleur à la suite d'un coup [...], tout cela ne procède nullement d'une nécessité, mais une fois de plus, du libre choix de Dieu (*ikhtirā' min Allāh ta'āla*) » (Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Shaykh Abī l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī*, 132). Al-Bāqillānī, dans son *Tamhīd* décrit ainsi cette opposition : « Si vous affirmez que cette nature éternelle est une chose vivante, sachante, puissante, qu'elle n'est pas une entité aveugle déterminant les actes, mais une volonté consciente qui produit l'acte par libre choix, en ce cas vous dites vrai et vous confirmez notre dire, à savoir que Dieu est l'auteur du monde. La querelle ne porte que sur la dénomination que vous donnez à l'auteur du monde. Vous l'appellez nature (*ṭab'*). La loi (*shar'*) interdit de l'appeler ainsi, mais la raison ne s'y oppose pas. Autrement dit, Dieu ne détermine pas nécessairement l'acte du fait de sa toute puissance, ce qui n'est pas le cas de la nature qui est une force aveugle, déterminant nécessairement son effet, d'une manière automatique. Considérée comme telle, la notion de nature est irrecevable et ne peut expliquer les phénomènes physiques. Elle n'est admissible que si elle désigne une réalité vivante, douée de conscience et de libre choix. Il ne s'agit alors que d'une querelle de mots et l'opinion de l'adversaire rejoint, en réalité, celle des *ahl al-ḥaqq* » (al-Bāqillānī, in Bernand, « La critique de la notion de nature dans le *kalām* », 79). Dans le *Shāmil* ainsi que dans *al-'Aqida al-nizāmiyya*, al-Juwaynī procède à une critique de la théorie des *aṣḥāb al-ṭabī'a* d'autant plus rigoureuse qu'elle emprunte l'outillage conceptuel de la *falsafa*. Dans *al-'Aqida al-nizāmiyya*, le

la lignée d'Aristote cherche à fonder une science de la nature capable de déterminer précisément les lois physiques des éléments qui sont dans le monde de la génération et de la corruption, ainsi que celle des êtres supra-lunaires.

3 La prophétie

La partie de notre commentaire consacrée à la question de la prophétie occupe une portion importante du texte. Elle se divise en trois sous-parties : l'une distingue l'attribut du prophète selon son essence et sa substance ; la deuxième concerne la manière dont le prophète s'occupe à parachever ceux qui sont déficients ; la troisième concerne le fait que les hommes ne sont pas tous égaux quant à leurs dispositions à recevoir cette perfection venant du prophète.

Une analyse attentive de cette partie sur la prophétie permet d'établir que la doctrine exposée ne correspond pas à la doctrine avicennienne de la prophétie telle qu'elle est développée dans les ouvrages les plus importants du philosophe.

passage succinct ou al-Juwaynī se livre à cette critique s'insère dans le chapitre qui traite de la venue à l'être du monde (*ḥadath al-ʿālam*) (1). Le monde est contingent, nous dit al-Juwaynī : « L'examen le moins minutieux nous permet de constater qu'à tout phénomène de l'univers peut s'appliquer un jugement de possibilité (2). Or ce qui est affirmé comme contingent ne peut être tenu pour nécessaire. Mais si le monde est contingent, il ne se suffit pas à lui-même. Il suppose donc un être nécessaire qui le détermine. Cet être ne se trouve pas au sein des êtres qui constituent l'univers. Aucun possible ne peut déterminer un autre possible. Si l'adepte de la théorie des natures prétend qu'il est possible d'admettre l'existence d'un principe de nécessitation aveugle inhérent à l'univers, on répondra que la notion d'une cause nécessitante, non consciente et dépourvue de capacité de choix est absurde (*mustahīl*). Comment celui qui prétend qu'un remède particulier peut supprimer une partie de la bile dans une région précise du corps, à l'exclusion des autres humeurs, expliquera-t-il que toute la bile ne disparaisse pas du fait du remède ? Quel est l'auteur de cette sélection ? Un principe abstrait de détermination ne peut être spécifique. Il ne peut, agissant sur des éléments semblables, caractériser tel élément plutôt qu'un autre (*innā l-mūjiba lā yukhaṣṣiṣu shayʾan min amthālihi*). L'expérience montre que le monde est le résultat d'une décision sélective, c'est-à-dire d'un choix conscient. L'existence d'un univers organisé où les contradictions trouvent leur solution ne peut être l'effet du hasard (*ittifāq*). Cette organisation implique une cause transcendante à cet univers et capable de choisir le meilleur des mondes possibles. Cette cause entraîne nécessairement le caractère adventice de l'effet. Le monde est donc l'effet d'un acte produit selon un mode défini, parmi d'autres modes possibles, du fait de la volonté d'une cause efficiente et libre. C'est le résultat de la détermination de la volonté créatrice (*mashīʾa*) », al-Juwaynī, *al-Aqida al-nizāmiyya*, in Bernard, « La critique de la notion de nature dans le *kalām* », 81–82.

La question de la prophétie est importante pour les *falāsifa*, qui l'intègrent dans le cadre d'un système philosophique qui tente de rendre raison de tout ce qui est. Le prophète est doté, à la fois par son imagination – qui reçoit les images des particuliers contenues dans les sphères célestes, et par son intellect – qui reçoit les formes intelligibles sans intermédiaire ni apprentissage – d'une réceptivité singulière et il se distingue également par sa capacité à agir sur la matière²⁷.

Cependant, il n'existe pas de mémoire intellectuelle selon Avicenne. La dépendance à l'égard de l'intellect agent en est d'autant plus forte puisque chaque intellection entraîne une nouvelle jonction avec le principe séparé :

Si les intelligibles ne sont pas constamment représentés en acte auprès de l'intellect, c'est parce que notre âme en est vide. Si elle ne l'était pas, ils y seraient représentés en acte, [seulement les intelligibles] ne disposent pas [dans l'âme] d'un dépôt comme la mémoire, car celle-ci a pour unique [objet] les sensibles. Tout au contraire, l'âme est tantôt en jonction tantôt en disjonction, et la mémoire est la recherche de la disposition à la parfaite jonction²⁸.

Pas plus que les autres hommes, le prophète n'est doté pour Avicenne d'une mémoire intellectuelle. Il connaît instantanément ou presque tout ce qu'il veut connaître. Son savoir est sûr parce que les formes qui sont dans l'intellect agent s'impriment dans son intellect selon un ordre logique qui comprend tous les moyens termes. Notre commentaire évoque le fait que lorsque le prophète connaît quelque chose, il ne l'oublie pas. Il est difficile de trouver un équivalent à cette assertion dans le corpus avicennien, d'autant plus que pour le philosophe, l'absence de mémoire intellectuelle est l'apanage de tous les hommes. Le prophète en revanche peut joindre son intellect à l'intellect agent sans effort ni préparation. A ce degré ultime de la connaissance humaine, Avicenne réserve le nom d'intellect saint (*'aql qudsī*) :

L'intuition est l'acte de l'intelligence (*fi'l al-dhihn*) par lequel elle saisit par elle-même le moyen terme ; cette puissance de l'intuition est la vivacité d'esprit (*al-dhakā*). Parfois le moyen terme est acquis par apprentissage, même si les premiers principes de l'apprentissage sont toujours

27 Pour une description des différents modes de prophétie chez Avicenne, voir Elamrani-Jamal, « Multiplicité des modes de la prophétie », 125–42.

28 Vajda, « Les notes d'Avicenne sur la 'Théologie d'Aristote' », 346–406.

obtenus grâce à l'intuition, puisque tout savoir peut être ramené en définitive à certains principes qui ont été découverts par les maîtres (*arbāb*), qui les ont ensuite transmis aux étudiants. Il est possible que l'homme trouve la vérité par lui-même et que le syllogisme se forme dans son intelligence sans [l'aide d'un] maître. L'intuition varie selon la quantité et la qualité. Quant à la quantité, c'est parce que certaines personnes ont, selon le nombre, plus d'intuition pour découvrir les moyens termes. Quant à la qualité, c'est parce que chez certaines personnes, elle est plus rapide. Cette variation ne se limite pas, mais elle admet toujours l'augmentation et la diminution ; elle s'arrête du point de vue de la diminution à celui qui n'a absolument pas d'intuition. Il faut donc qu'elle s'arrête du point de vue de l'augmentation à celui qui possède une intuition pour toute solution recherchée, ou pour la plupart, et à celui qui a une intuition dans le temps le plus court. Il est donc possible que l'âme de certaines personnes soit disposée en raison de l'intensité de sa pureté et de la puissance de sa jonction avec les principes intelligibles à être inspirée, c'est-à-dire réceptive (*qubūlan lahā*) en toute chose à l'intellect agent, de sorte que les formes qui sont dans l'intellect agent s'impriment en elle, soit d'un coup, soit presque d'un coup, et non en ce qu'elle les accepte en vertu d'une autorité, mais selon un ordre qui inclut les moyens termes ; car ce qui est accepté en vertu d'une autorité concernant les choses qui ne sont connues que par leur cause ne possède pas de certitude rationnelle. Il s'agit là d'une sorte de prophétie, ou plutôt de sa forme la plus haute, celle qui mérite le plus d'être appelée « puissance sainte » (*quwwa qudsiyya*). C'est le degré le plus élevé des puissances humaines²⁹.

29 Ibn Sinā, *Shifā', al-Nafs*, v.6, 219–20. Voici un autre texte du *Traité de l'âme* du *Shifā'* relatif à cette question : « Sache que le savoir (*al-ta'allum*), qu'il soit obtenu par l'intermédiaire de quelqu'un ou [directement] par celui qui apprend, comprend des degrés divers. Parmi ceux qui cherchent à acquérir le savoir, certains sont plus enclins à la conception [intellectuelle] (*al-taṣawwur*), parce que leur disposition (*al-isti'dād*) [*i.e.* l'intellect matériel], qui est antérieure à celle que nous avons évoquée est plus puissante (*aqwā*). Si l'homme possède cette disposition en lui-même et non grâce à un autre, cette disposition puissante s'appelle 'intuition intellectuelle' (*ḥads*). Cette disposition est plus développée chez certains hommes, de sorte qu'ils n'ont pas besoin de beaucoup [d'efforts] pour se joindre à l'intellect agent, ni d'exercice, ni d'enseignement, mais ils ont une forte disposition pour cela ; comme si la disposition seconde était réalisée en eux, ou plutôt comme s'ils connaissaient toute chose d'eux-mêmes. Il s'agit là du plus haut degré que puisse atteindre cette disposition. Cette disposition de l'intellect matériel doit s'appeler 'intellect saint' (*'aql qudsī*) et elle est du même genre que l'intellect *in habitu*, excepté qu'elle est

Dans ce passage du *Traité de l'âme du Shifā'*, Avicenne évoque l'intellect saint en rapport avec la capacité réceptrice du prophète à l'égard de l'intellect agent. L'intellect saint constitue précisément la capacité singulière d'être réceptive en toute chose à l'intellect agent. On peut noter que notre commentaire gomme toute référence à l'intellect agent. Il est ensuite question dans notre commentaire de la perfection de l'intellect pratique du prophète :

L'allusion au fait que la faculté pratique de l'âme du prophète, que le salut soit sur lui, a atteint sa perfection est l'intention [même] de la parole du Très-Haut : « Et Nous te faciliterons la facilité » (Q 87 :8). Cela signifie que tous les hommes partagent la même capacité à faire le bien ou le mal, à [tendre vers] la débauche ou la probité. Excepté que pour certains, la probité³⁰ est plus aisée ; leur nature y est plus facilement encline. Cette facilité désigne la qualité nommée *habitus moral* (*khuluq*). Ainsi, celui qui est heureux, pur, pieux, sain, a une âme caractérisée³¹ par l'*habitus moral* de la probité et de la pureté ; celui qui est débauché, que Dieu en préserve, [a une âme] contraire à cela. La parole du Très-Haut « Et Nous te faciliterons la facilité » fait allusion à cet état [qui est celui du prophète]. Avec ce verset s'achève la description³² de la condition du prophète dans la perfection de sa faculté théorétique tout d'abord puis de sa faculté pratique ensuite³³.

Ce passage reprend un développement de Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī dans les *Maṭālib al-ʿāliya min al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, qui est un ouvrage tardif³⁴. Dans cet ouvrage, al-Rāzī distingue deux preuves distinctes permettant d'établir la prophétie. La première est fondée sur l'existence des miracles et la seconde est appelée : « la preuve de la prophétie par sa capacité à perfectionner ceux qui sont imparfaits » (*fī taqrīr al-qawl bi-l-nubuwwa 'an ṭarīq ākhar wa-huwa qudratu l-nabī 'alā takmīl al-nāqishīn*).

[d'un degré] très élevé et qu'elle n'est pas commune à tous les hommes », Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā', al-Nafs*, v.6, 219.

30 Je ne suis pas la leçon de 'Āṣī mais celle de l'édition de Téhéran.

31 Le passage qui va de « a une âme caractérisée par la vertu de la probité et de la pureté » est omis dans le ms d'Université. Cependant, l'édition de Téhéran (supra, n. 6) a *mawsūfa* et non *mawsūma* comme l'indique 'Āṣī.

32 Leçon de l'édition de Téhéran.

33 Éd. 'Āṣī, *al-Taṣṣīr al-qur'ānī*, 99.

34 Pour la datation des ouvrages de al-Rāzī, voir Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, 10.

Voici comment al-Rāzī décrit cette seconde preuve :

La seconde [preuve] consiste à dire : nous savons pour commencer quelles sont les doctrines vraies et quels sont les actes corrects. Sachant cela, lorsque nous voyons une personne qui invite les hommes à la religion véritable (*yad'ū al-khalq ilā dīn al-ḥaqq*) et que nous voyons que son discours a un effet puissant qui détourne les hommes du faux (*bāṭil*) vers le vrai, nous savons alors qu'il est un prophète véritable (*nabī ṣādiq*), qu'il est obligatoire de suivre. Cette méthode est plus rationnelle (*aqrab ilā l-'aql*) et les doutes la concernant sont moindres³⁵.

Al-Rāzī énonce ensuite les prémisses qu'il convient d'énumérer afin que cette méthode soit valide. Il établit une hiérarchie entre les âmes humaines. Cette hiérarchie même que l'on trouve dans notre commentaire : (a) la majorité des hommes qui est imparfaite (*nāqiṣ*) ; (b) les saints (*awlīyā'*) qui possèdent et la perfection de la faculté théorique et celle de la faculté pratique, mais qui sont incapables de perfectionner les autres ; et enfin, (c) ceux qui possèdent cette double perfection et sont capables de perfectionner les autres. Ceux-là sont les prophètes³⁶. Cette distinction entre les saints et les prophètes ne se trouve nulle part dans le corpus d'Avicenne. Dans les *Ma'ālim uṣūl al-dīn*, qui est aussi une œuvre tardive, al-Rāzī distingue encore plus précisément entre le *walī* et le *nabī* : le premier peut perfectionner une personne et le second une multitude de personnes³⁷.

Ayman Shihadeh relève que l'expression « *tāmm wa-fawq al-tamām* » que l'on trouve dans notre texte pour désigner le prophète se trouve également chez Avicenne³⁸. On la trouve en effet dans le *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, (1, 186) où elle désigne une chose parfaite sous un certain aspect et qui procure cette perfection à d'autres êtres³⁹. Mais Avicenne n'applique pas cet attribut au prophète. Pour al-Rāzī, cette preuve est supérieure à la preuve par les miracles dans la mesure où elle s'attache à l'essence de la chose et établit la véracité d'une assertion en vertu de la nature même de l'essence. Sachant que l'essence de la prophétie est le perfectionnement des hommes imparfaits par un homme parfait, on est

35 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, L. 8, 103.

36 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, L. 8, 104.

37 Al-Rāzī, *Ma'ālim uṣūl al-dīn*, 101.

38 Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, 135.

39 Il s'agit d'une expression courante dans les textes néoplatoniciens. On trouve *tāmm wa-fawqa l-tamām* dans la *Pseudo-Théologie* d'Aristote par exemple où elle caractérise le Premier qui n'a besoin de rien pour être parfait ; *Uthūlijjyā*, 135.

donc en mesure de juger si une personne est un prophète par essence ou s'il ne l'est pas. Il s'agit d'un *burhān al-li-ma* opposé au *burhān al-inna*, qui caractérise la nature de la preuve par le miracle. Al-Rāzī dit avoir tiré la distinction entre prophète et saint de Ghazālī, sans préciser toutefois de quel ouvrage il s'agit.

Il y a en outre une autre différence doctrinale entre la conception de la prophétie d'Avicenne et celle d'al-Rāzī. Dans les *Maṭālib*⁴⁰, ce dernier établit que la mission du prophète a trois fonctions principales concernant l'homme (1) un aspect métaphysique qui correspond au perfectionnement théorétique de l'homme ; (2) un aspect éthique qui correspond à sa perfection éthique ; (3) un aspect eschatologique qui correspond au but final de l'homme. Or, Avicenne précise dans le dernier livre de la métaphysique du *Shifā'* que le prophète, qui est aussi législateur, doit s'assurer de ne pas laisser entendre qu'il existe des vérités métaphysiques qui soient hors de la portée de l'homme du commun, car cela pourrait engendrer chez ce dernier de la confusion, et troubler l'ordre social⁴¹. Le but du prophète-législateur pour Avicenne est de faire régner la loi divine grâce à laquelle les hommes peuvent vivre selon l'ordre le plus juste. Avicenne affirme cependant : « qu'il n'est pas dommageable [à l'ordre de la cité] que le discours du prophète-législateur contienne des symboles et des signes qui enjoignent ceux qui sont naturellement prédisposés à la réflexion théorétique à poursuivre les investigations philosophiques »⁴². Cette remarque montre clairement que la finalité de la fonction du prophète-législateur n'est pas la réalisation intellectuelle des habitants de la cité vertueuse, même si elle peut en être une conséquence. Ainsi, il apparaît que la doctrine du double perfectionnement de l'intellect théorique et de la partie pratique de l'âme par le prophète de ceux qui sont déficients n'est pas une thèse avicennienne.

Ce triple apport du prophète, présent dans notre commentaire, n'est donc pas une doctrine avicennienne, mais une thèse d'al-Rāzī, largement développée et étayée dans les *Maṭālib*, plus précisément dans la seconde partie du livre sur la prophétie, celle consacrée « à l'autre méthode (*ṭarīq*), qui est par la capacité du prophète à perfectionner ceux qui sont déficients » (*qudratu l-nabī 'alā takmīl al-nāqishīn*), la première étant consacrée à la preuve par les miracles.

Du point de vue stylistique, les parallèles entre notre commentaire et des passages des *Maṭālib al-ʿāliya min al-ʿilm al-ilāhī* sont frappants. Dans notre texte, nous lisons⁴³ :

40 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, L. 8, 115-20.

41 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, *Métaphysique*, 366.

42 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, *Métaphysique*, 366.

43 ʿĀṣī, *al-Taḥsīn al-qurʾānī*, 4-6.

أحدهما القوة النظرية والثانية العملية وهي القوة التي باعتبارها يقدر على التصرف في هذا البدن وبواسطته في أجسام هذا العالم على الوجه الأصوب الأصح.

Dans les *Maṭālib*⁴⁴ d'al-Rāzī, ce passage fait écho :

فتكون قوته النظرية مستكملة بأنواع الجلايا القدسية والمعارف الإلهية وتكون قوته العملية مؤثرة في أجسام هذا العالم بأنواع التصرفات.

Aussi, on peut lire dans notre commentaire⁴⁵ :

والمطلب الثاني من النبوة الاشتغال بدعوة الخلق إلى طريق الحق.

Et dans les *Maṭālib* d'al-Rāzī⁴⁶ :

فكل من دعا الخلق إلى الإقبال على الحق والإعراض عن الخلق فهو النبي الصادق.

Mais aussi⁴⁷ :

أن حرفة النبوة والرسالة عبارة عن دعوة الخلق من الاشتغال بالخلق إلى خدمة الحق ومن الإقبال على الدنيا إلى الإقبال على الآخرة.

Ou encore, on lit dans notre commentaire⁴⁸ :

المرتبة الأولى تزكية النفس عن العقائد الباطلة والأخلاق الذميمة وهذا إشارة إلى إزالة ما لا ينبغي ولا شك أن إزالة النقوش الباطلة عن لوح الروح يجب تقديمها على تحصيل النقوش الكاملة الطاهرة فيه.

Et dans les *Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* d'al-Rāzī⁴⁹ :

واعلم أن المهمات على قسمين: أحدهما إزالة ما لا ينبغي والثاني تحصيل ما ينبغي. والأول متقدم على الثاني لأن اللوح إذا حصل فيه نقوش فاسدة فالواجب

44 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, L. 8, 107.

45 ʿĀṣī, *al-Taḥṣīn al-qurʾānī*, 99, l. 8.

46 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, L. 8, 108.

47 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, L. 8, 115.

48 ʿĀṣī, *al-Taḥṣīn al-qurʾānī*, 101.

49 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, L. 8, 119.

إزالتها أولاً حتى يمكن تحصيل النقوش الصحيحة فيه ثانياً. فثبت أن إزالة ما لا ينبغي متقدمة على تحصيل ما ينبغي.

Ces similitudes stylistiques montrent la proximité de notre commentaire avec la grande somme du théologien ash'arite, les *Maṭālib al-'ālīya min al-'ilm al-Ilāhī*.

4 La doctrine de la vertu

La doctrine de la vertu que nous trouvons dans notre texte, au § 13, ne correspond pas à la doctrine exposée dans le corpus avicennien. Pour Avicenne, l'âme est une substance immatérielle et noble qui se trouve attachée à un corps, elle ne peut être entachée de quoi que ce soit de vil. Ce n'est qu'en se laissant soumettre peu à peu au corps, qu'elle peut acquérir certains habitus moraux vils. En elle-même elle est noble et vierge de toute vilénie ainsi que le philosophe l'établit dans son *Livre de la Genèse et du Retour* :

L'habitus moral (*al-khuluq*) est une disposition qui advient à l'âme rationnelle en vertu de sa soumission au corps ou de sa non soumission au corps [...] Ainsi, la disposition de domination n'est pas étrangère à la substance de l'âme, mais elle appartient à la nature de ce qui est séparé et de ce qui est à part de la nature et de ses conséquents. C'est la disposition de soumission [de l'âme au corps] qui est étrangère [à l'âme] et qui est acquise à partir de la matière ; elle est contraire à ce qui est en conformité avec la substance de l'âme. Le bonheur de l'âme est dans la perfection de son essence selon le mode qui lui est propre : c'est de devenir un monde intelligible. Quant à son bonheur relatif, au lien qu'elle entretient avec le corps, c'est d'avoir la disposition de domination⁵⁰.

Dans ce texte d'Avicenne – contrairement à ce qui dit notre commentaire – l'habitus vertueux est la disposition innée qu'ont toutes les âmes à dominer leur passion. Au sujet de l'habitus moral, Avicenne écrit dans ce même ouvrage, qu'une « disposition de domination » à l'égard du corps est inscrite dans la substance même de l'âme. Cette disposition ne s'acquiert pas. S'acquiert en revanche la disposition qui consiste pour l'âme à se laisser asservir par les passions du corps. L'âme est ontologiquement disposée à dominer le corps. Dès lors, tous les hommes sont également disposés à dominer leur passion ; ils se

⁵⁰ Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*, 109–10.

distinguent par l'usage qu'ils font de cette disposition. Contrairement à l'intellect théorique qui peut être plus ou moins prompt à se perfectionner selon les individus, l'intellect pratique est, par nature, identique chez tous les hommes: c'est la disposition d'assujettissement des passions du corps présente chez tous dès le début de leur existence.

Dans une autre épître d'Avicenne, *Fī 'ilm al-akhlāq*, on peut lire :

Tous les habitus moraux, les bons comme les mauvais sont acquis (*al-akhlāq kulluhā al-jamīl minhā wa-l-qabīḥ minhā hiya muktasaba*). Il est possible pour l'homme, quand il n'a pas un habitus vertueux réalisé en lui de le réaliser dans son âme. Quand par accident (*ṣādafa*) son âme a un habitus moral réalisé en elle, il lui est possible par sa volonté de passer de cet habitus à un autre qui est son contraire [...] Ainsi, l'habitus moral vertueux est réalisé par habitude et il en est de même pour l'habitus moral vil⁵¹.

Ce texte ne contredit pas celui d'*al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*, excepté qu'ici, Avicenne précise sa pensée. L'âme est une substance noble, immatérielle, et en tant que telle, elle est naturellement disposée à dominer la substance matérielle à laquelle elle se trouve attachée. Cependant, parfois, elle se laisse submerger par les passions de cette substance et alors elle acquiert des dispositions viles ou au contraire vertueuses. Avicenne poursuit dans la même épître :

L'habitus vertueux (*al-khuluq*) est une disposition (*hay'a*) qui advient à l'âme rationnelle du fait qu'elle dépende du corps et soit liée à lui. La relation qui existe entre le corps et l'âme nécessite qu'il y ait entre eux une passion et une action. Le corps, grâce aux puissances corporelles, accomplit des actes qui sont contraires [à l'activité de] l'âme. Alors, l'âme prend le dessus sur le corps et le vainc, mais parfois, elle se laisse dominer par le corps. Lorsque cette soumission se répète, alors advient dans l'âme une disposition d'obéissance vis-à-vis du corps de sorte qu'elle se trouve sous une contrainte qu'elle ne connaissait pas auparavant. [...] Le bonheur de l'âme selon la perfection de son essence et du point de vue qui lui est propre, c'est de devenir un monde intelligible et son bonheur du point de vue de la relation qu'elle entretient avec le corps, c'est qu'elle ait une disposition de domination [à son égard]⁵².

51 Ibn Sīnā, *Fī 'ilm al-akhlāq*, 369–77 et 373–74.

52 Ibn Sīnā, *Fī 'ilm al-akhlāq*, 376.

Pour Avicenne, l'âme, substance immatérielle, ne peut être altérée dans son essence par la réitération d'une attitude de soumission au corps. Cette disposition qui la détourne de son but véritable demeure en elle après la mort du corps, mais elle n'est pas une propriété nécessaire (*amr lāzim*) de l'essence de l'âme. Il s'agit, comme il l'écrit dans la métaphysique du *Shifā'*, d'un caractère « accidentel et étranger qui ne dure pas et ne subsiste pas »⁵³. La disposition de soumission acquise par l'âme est due à la répétition d'actes qui ont pour seule finalité le contentement des puissances animales tant celui de l'irascible que de la concupiscible. Lorsque la cause disparaît avec la mort du corps, cet état étranger (*amr 'arīḍ gharīb*) à la substance de l'âme « disparaît et s'efface peu à peu jusqu'à ce que l'âme se purifie et atteigne la félicité qui lui est propre »⁵⁴.

Dans notre commentaire, la disposition à faire le bien comme celle de faire le mal semblent être innées⁵⁵. Il paraît difficile de concilier cette doctrine avec l'une des thèses fondamentales de la psychologie avicennienne qui pose comme principe que l'immatérialité de l'âme humaine et sa simplicité la rendent ontologiquement inaltérable.

Comme le montre Ayman Shihadeh⁵⁶, dans ses œuvres tardives, al-Rāzī considère que les âmes humaines sont d'espèces différentes, dans la mesure où leurs origines se trouvent dans les âmes des sphères célestes. Ces âmes célestes sont des archétypes ou natures complètes (*ṭibā' tām*) dans la mesure où chacune d'elles possède un ensemble de qualités (*ṣifāt khāṣṣa*) d'une manière parfaite, qui se manifeste de manière imparfaite dans les âmes qu'elle produit (*al-sirr al-maktūm*). Puisque certaines âmes des sphères peuvent être magnanimes (*ḥurr*), nobles, vertueuses alors que d'autres peuvent être viles, mauvaises et stupides, ces mêmes caractéristiques vont apparaître dans les âmes humaines à la fois dans leur essence et dans les effets qu'elles reçoivent de ces âmes durant leur vie. Sur la base de cette théorie de la différence des âmes humaines, al-Rāzī exprime parfois un déterminisme psychologique relatif aux caractères des hommes. Ainsi les différences entre les âmes humaines sont semblables à celles des différences qui existent entre les animaux d'espèces différentes : ânes, chevaux, loups, etc. Al-Rāzī note dans ses *Maṭālib*⁵⁷ :

53 Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā'*, *Métaphysique*, 431.

54 Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā'*, *Métaphysique*, 431.

55 Dans sa *Risāla fī l-Tanbīh 'alā ba'd al-asrār al-mūda'a fī ba'd suwar al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm wa-l-furqān al-karīm*, 67, al-Rāzī écrit qu'il a été démontré rationnellement que l'homme, dans son principe, est dépravé (*fā-thabata bi-l-burhān al-'aqlī anna al-aql fī l-insān huwa al-khusrān*).

56 Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, 118.

57 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, L. 7, 148.

L'examen de ces modes dépend du fait que la divergence des qualités de l'âme relève nécessairement des substances des âmes. Il en est ainsi parce que [les âmes] sont différentes du point de vue de la substance.

Pour Avicenne en revanche, si les âmes des animaux sont matérielles celles des hommes sont essentiellement identiques et immatérielles. Elles varient quant à leurs habitus moraux en fonction des variations d'humeur qui adviennent en raison de rapport avec leur corps. La thèse esquissée dans notre texte selon laquelle certaines âmes sont par nature « vertueuses » alors que d'autres sont par nature « mauvaises » n'est pas une doctrine avicennienne. C'est là en revanche une thèse élaborée par al-Rāzī dans ses œuvres tardives⁵⁸.

5 La caractérisation des plaisirs et l'eschatologie

Pour ce qui est de la survie des âmes humaines après la mort, dans notre commentaire, il est fait mention du feu sensible : « *al-nār al-mahsūsa* ». Ce « feu sensible » s'ajoute, dit le texte, au feu spirituel « *al-nār al-ruḥāniyya* » pour augmenter la douleur de ceux qui n'ont pas suivi la loi du prophète⁵⁹. La mention de ce « feu sensible » est difficilement compatible avec une eschatologie qui, comme celle d'Avicenne, n'accepte pas la réalité de la résurrection corporelle⁶⁰. Par ailleurs, lorsqu'on examine les passages consacrés à l'eschatologie dans notre commentaire, on peut noter qu'ils accentuent la dépendance de l'âme à l'égard du corps et semblent atténuer l'importance qu'a chez Avicenne la réalisation de l'intellect théorétique pour l'obtention de la béatitude⁶¹.

La définition avicennienne du plaisir est la même que celle d'Aristote : « Le plaisir est la perception de ce qui convient » (*idrāk al-mulā'im*)⁶². Or, la description du plaisir qui est faite ici ne correspond pas à cette définition. La méthode qui consiste à montrer que les plaisirs corporels sont relatifs et dépendent des circonstances est celle utilisée par al-Rāzī dans *Risālat dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*⁶³. Contrairement aux plaisirs intellectuels qui sont bons

58 Ce serait sous l'influence d'Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī. Sur ce point, voir Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, 118.

59 'Āṣī, *al-Taṣīr al-qur'ānī*, 100.

60 Ibn Sīnā, *Risāla fī aqsām al-'ulūm al-'aqliyya*, 71.

61 'Āṣī, *al-Taṣīr al-qur'ānī*, 102, § 2.

62 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, *Métaphysique*, 2, 369 ; 2, 424.

63 Al-Rāzī, *Risālat dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*, Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, 216.

وهذا أيضا يدل على أنهم يعتقدون فيها أنها طيبات وسعادات إلا أن لما كانت ممزوجة بالآفات مخلوطة بالمخافات وجب على العاقل الاحتراز عنها.

par eux-mêmes, les plaisirs sensibles (1) se contentent de combler un manque (on apprécie d'autant le verre d'eau qu'on a soif) et (2) s'ils sont des plaisirs, sont des plaisirs vils (*ladhdhāt khasīsa ḥaqīra jiddan*)⁶⁴.

On retrouve donc dans *Risālat dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā* le même argument que dans notre commentaire selon lequel les hommes vils et les hommes bons partagent les mêmes plaisirs que sont la nourriture et les relations sexuelles⁶⁵. L'un des arguments élaborés par al-Rāzī pour montrer que les plaisirs physiques ne sont que des ersatz de plaisirs intellectuels est le suivant. C'est la condamnation unanime par la communauté des sages (*al-'uqalā'*) du plaisir sensible poussé à son extrême chez une personne donnée⁶⁶. Argument que l'on retrouve également dans notre commentaire.

Du point de vue de l'analyse interne, les thèses exposées dans ce commentaire sont conformes à celles que Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī développe dans ses œuvres tardives, notamment les *Maṭālib al-āliya min al-ilm al-ilāhī* et la *Risālat dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*. La tonalité générale de l'épître est proprement ash'arite : elle atténue la causalité de la nature, qui entrave la puissance divine, met le prophète au centre de la doctrine eschatologique d'une part, et développe d'autre part une eschatologie plus conforme à l'orthodoxie musulmane, acceptant la résurrection corporelle.

6 Conclusion

Dans le cas du commentaire à la sourate *al-A'īlā*, l'attribution de sa paternité à al-Rāzī ne pose pas de vrai problème dans la mesure où les preuves internes que permet l'analyse doctrinale sont corroborées par des preuves externes. En effet, deux manuscrits très anciens, notamment celui de la *Safīna* de Tabrīz, datée du VIII^e siècle de l'hégire, ainsi qu'un manuscrit conservé à la bibliothèque Daneshgāh à Téhéran et copié de la main de Sayyid Ḥaydar al-Āmulī, le

64 Al-Rāzī, *Risālat dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*, Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, 217.

65 Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, 216.

66 Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, 223.

وذلك لأنهم إذا شاهدوا إنسانا كثير الأكل عظيم الرغبة في اللقمة استحقروه ونظروا إليه بعين الإزراء والإهانة وحكموا عليه بالبهيمة.

Dans notre commentaire, 'Āṣī, *Al-Taṭfīr al-qur'ānī*, 102.

لأننا لو فرضنا عاقلا لا هم له إلا الأكل والشرب والوقاع وكان عمره مقصورا على إصلاح هذه المهمات كان منسوبا إلى الخسة والدناءة وإلى أنه كالبهيمة.

célèbre sufi imamite du VIII^e siècle⁶⁷, attribuent notre commentaire à al-Rāzī. Dans la *Safīna* de Tabrīz, notre commentaire figure à deux reprises : il existe à l'état de traité indépendant et il est également inclus dans la *Risāla fī l-Tanbīh 'alā ba'd al-asrār al-mūda'a fī ba'd suwar al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm*⁶⁸.

Si on en vient aux manuscrits qui attribuent ce commentaire à Avicenne, deux d'entre eux sont très tardifs : Ist (Uni 15485) et Mashhad 3/22 (62). Le premier que j'ai pu examiner date du XIX^e siècle. Ali Aşghar Hikmat indique que le ms de Mashhad, sur lequel il base son édition, date de 1205/1790. Si le manuscrit conservé à Téhéran – que je n'ai malheureusement pas pu examiner – date également du XVIII^e–/XIX^e siècle, cela pourrait signifier que l'attribution à Avicenne s'est faite à une époque tardive et il serait intéressant de chercher à déterminer dans quel milieu elle s'est effectuée. D'une manière générale, il convient de se demander si ces attributions à Avicenne sont accidentelles – dues à l'ignorance des copistes ou à des interventions de feuillets – ou si elles sont intentionnelles en ce qu'elles permettraient par exemple de considérer qu'Avicenne est fidèle à l'orthodoxie ash'arite et à autoriser par là-même l'étude du reste de son corpus.

Mon travail sur le commentaire de la sourate *al-A'lā* attribué à Avicenne dans certains manuscrits permet de montrer qu'une analyse doctrinale minutieuse, établissant un parallèle entre les doctrines du texte dont l'authenticité est examinée et celles des ouvrages dont l'authenticité ne fait aucun doute est une méthode fructueuse. Cela ne signifie pas que des ouvrages d'un même auteur ne puissent présenter des évolutions doctrinales majeures les uns par rapport aux autres. Mais il convient, lorsqu'on étudie les nombreuses épîtres et traités attribués à Avicenne, d'être attentif aux infléchissements conceptuels qui doivent parfois conduire à s'interroger sur l'authenticité du texte. Un travail important reste à mener sur les pseudépigraphes avicenniens, qui ne pourra faire l'économie d'une analyse doctrinale minutieuse de chacun des textes examinés. Outre les 110 traités classés par Y. Mahdavi parmi « *Āthār mashkūk* », de nombreuses autres épîtres attribuées à Avicenne méritent d'être reconsidérées selon cette méthode.

67 Cf. *Fihrist* de Mishkāt à l'Université de Téhéran, vol. 3, part 1. 43–44. Je remercie vivement Hassan Ansari de m'avoir signalé l'existence de ces manuscrits et d'avoir eu la grande gentillesse de me procurer une copie du ms de la *Safīna* de Tabrīz.

68 Al-Rāzī, *Risāla fī l-Tanbīh 'alā ba'd al-asrār al-mūda'a fī ba'd suwar al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm*, 29–52. Cependant, personne jusqu'à présent n'avait établi le lien entre ce commentaire d'al-Rāzī et le même texte édité sous le titre *Tafsīr sūrat al-A'lā* et attribué à Avicenne.

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Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Platonist Account of the Essence of Time

Peter Adamson and Andreas Lammer

When we think of Ash'arite responses to Avicenna (d. 428/1037), the first author to come to mind is al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), thanks to his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. This work is dominated by issues of philosophical theology. Al-Ghazālī is particularly exercised by Avicenna's view that God has a necessary relationship to the universe. From this doctrine flow other Avicennan positions criticized in the *Tahāfut*, including the eternity of the universe, God's universal knowledge of particulars, and the impossibility of miracles. But the Ash'arite reactions to Avicenna both precede and exceed the *Tahāfut*, and were by no means restricted to attacking necessitarianism. We already find al-Ghazālī's teacher al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) drawing on Avicenna and, alongside the *Tahāfut*, another early attack on Avicenna came from al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153).¹ It was only the beginning of centuries' worth of Ash'arite engagement with Avicennan philosophy. Unsurprisingly, this tradition did have much to say about philosophical theology. Of course it is well known that theologians delved into Avicenna's logic too, something that would have had the approval of al-Ghazālī himself.² Yet Ash'arite authors also took an interest in Avicenna's physics, and treated this as a discipline worthy of discussion in its own right, while of course keeping sight of its significance for theology.

An excellent example is the treatment of time given by the greatest Avicennizing Ash'arite of them all, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210). It has previously been suggested that on this topic, Fakhr al-Dīn underwent a development "from Aristotle to Plato".³ But it seems rather that he was always conscious of fatal flaws within the Aristotelian-Avicennan view that time is the measure or magnitude of motion, and inclined towards a different idea, which he attributes to Plato: time is a self-subsisting substance, independent of and prior to changing things. In his early works, he could not yet endorse the "Platonic" position, because he saw that it, too, suffered from a number of

1 See Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*; Rudolph, "La preuve de l'existence de Dieu chez Avicenne et dans la théologie musulmane"; Madelung, "Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's Proof for the Existence of God"; al-Shahrastānī, *Struggling with the Philosopher*.

2 See, e.g., Street, "Arabic Logic".

3 al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa-ārā'uḥu l-kalāmiyya wa-l-falsafīyya*, 450–62, here 454.

serious objections. In his later works, he was able to overcome these objections by arguing that time is indeed contingent, yet nonetheless capable of providing the basis for beforeness, simultaneity, and afterness. So it is correct to say that Fakhr al-Dīn developed his views on time, but his development consisted primarily in finding a way to eliminate the objections that plagued the Platonic account.

His mature position is set out in a comprehensive and detailed discussion found in his *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*. In what follows, we will analyze the relevant section of the *Maṭālib* and show how it differs from the discussions of time in his earlier systematic works.⁴ We will also provide occasional references to his commentaries on two of Avicenna's works: *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt* and the brief compendium *ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*.⁵

1 Fakhr al-Dīn's Criticism of Other Views about Time's Essence

In the *Maṭālib*, Fakhr al-Dīn divides his discussion of time into two large sections, devoted respectively to time's existence (*wujūd*) and time's quiddity (*māhiyya*).⁶ Both sections are marked by Fakhr al-Dīn's characteristic penchant for complex dialectical argument, which takes its starting point from previous views put forward on the question at hand. A range of authors is considered. The earlier philosopher of Rayy, Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī (d. 313/925), as well as Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. 560/1164–65) play a role in both sections. But of course it is Avicenna who looms largest among the targets of Fakhr al-Dīn's refutations. Fakhr al-Dīn is often less than forthcoming concerning his own views in such dialectical contexts. In this case, though, he

4 For questions about chronology of Fakhr al-Dīn's works, see al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa-ārāʾuhu l-kalāmīyya wa-l-falsafīyya*, 56–164; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, esp. 7–11; Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life", 344; and Altaş, "Fahredden er-Rāzī'nin Eserlerinin Kronolojisi". Zarkan and Griffel take the *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* to have been written several years before the *Maṭālib*, whereas Shihadeh and Altaş state that it was authored after the *Maṭālib*. Fakhr al-Dīn himself refers in his *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* to his (apparently already composed) parallel discussions in the *Maṭālib*; see II.6, 2:87 and III.7, 3:100.

5 On the former, see also Mayer, "Avicenna against Time Beginning". The commentary on Avicenna's *ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* is particularly significant, as it was written roughly at the same time as the *Maṭālib*. Although the *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* is primarily a critical exposition of Avicenna's text *ad litteram*, Fakhr al-Dīn at several places reveals his own opinion. Interestingly, some of these passages correspond word for word with statements we find in the *Maṭālib*.

6 The section on the existence of time is in *al-Maṭālib*, V.1–3, 5:9–49, with its quiddity and related issues treated in V.4–11, 5:51–107.

does state clearly which understanding of time he prefers, namely the position he ascribes to Plato: time is independent and self-subsisting. This "Platonic" understanding of time is preferred to the contrasting supervenience account of time in Avicenna, which can be traced back to Aristotle.

As noted the *Maṭālib*'s inquiry into the essence or quiddity of time follows directly on a long discussion of time's existence. This has recently been examined by one of the present authors elsewhere, so only a brief summary needs to be given.⁷ The problem, as Fakhr al-Dīn sees it, is whether time exists in concrete reality or only in the mind. (Apparently he considers it uncontroversial that time exists at least mentally.) After considering skeptical arguments against time's extra-mental existence, he evaluates Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī's diametrically opposed claim that time's existence is simply self-evident and stands in no need of proof or argument. Then he looks at four attempts to prove that it exists extra-mentally. These include an idea proposed by Avicenna who established time as the magnitude or measure of motion (*miqdār al-ḥaraka*) from a consideration of an object's possibilities to move certain distances at certain speeds, which hints at time as a real feature of the physical world.⁸ Finally, Fakhr al-Dīn indicates his support for an earlier *kalām* theory devised by Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915–16) and reported by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935–36). This is that time must exist since we are able to coordinate two events, as when I say that I will meet you at sunrise—the time or moment is "stipulated" (*tuwaqqatuhu*) as that which links our meeting and the rising of the sun.

As is suggested by the very division into thematic sections, Fakhr al-Dīn seems to consider the issue of time's existence to be relatively independent from the issue of its essence. Thus, he recognizes al-Jubbā'ī's stipulative account as "a strong proof and demonstration" that time exists,⁹ but he does not see it as telling us what time actually is, despite listing it among the candidate accounts of the quiddity of time.¹⁰ Even more striking in this respect is the way he handles the account of time given by Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī. The latter famously made time one of his five eternal principles, insisting that its existence is self-evident and that it is a self-subsisting substance (*jawhar qā'im bi-dhātihī*). Fakhr al-Dīn deals with these two claims separately. When it comes to time's self-evident existence, he simply presents a series of considerations

7 Adamson, "The Existence of Time in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*".

8 See Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing*, 11.11, §1f., now analyzed in Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna's Physics*, 431–43.

9 *al-Maṭālib*, v.3, 5:49.

10 *al-Maṭālib*, v.4, 5:51, quoted below.

in favor of the idea without indicating agreement. When he comes to time's essence, by contrast, he strongly endorses the independent self-subsistence of time. Thus, he decouples the link seen by Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā between time's epistemic immediacy and its metaphysical primacy, accepting the latter but (apparently) not the former. Nonetheless, there is an intimate relation between his handling of the two topics. While he does not mention the earlier al-Rāzī by name when talking of time's independent self-subsistence, Fakhr al-Dīn does follow his predecessor by associating this doctrine with Plato.¹¹ Furthermore, in both cases he contrasts the self-subsistence theory to another account, according to which time supervenes on the motion of the outermost celestial sphere.

Indeed this is the first and most extensively discussed idea mentioned by Fakhr al-Dīn under the heading of time's quiddity: that it has something to do with the celestial motion. He mentions two variants of the proposal, namely that time is "the measure of the motion of the greatest [celestial] sphere" and that time is this motion itself. These options appear in a list of theories about time's quiddity, which will structure the subsequent discussion:

al-Maṭālib, v.4, 5:51f.: (a) Aristotle and his later commentators, like Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī¹² (d. 950/1) and Abū 'Alī b. Sīnā, held that time is the measure (*miqdār*) of the motion of the greatest [celestial] sphere. (b) Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, author of the *Mu'tabar*, said that it is the measure of the extension (*imtidād*) of existence. (c) Other people said it is an expression for the motion of the greatest sphere itself. (d) Others said the meaning of time is nothing but mere stipulation (*mujarrad al-tawqīf*) in the sense we have set out and explained [i.e. al-Jubbā'ī's account]. (e) Others said that just as the point makes a line through its motion, so the now makes time through its motion. And just as the point, when it makes the line through its motion, connects two parts of the line, but if that point stops then there is a break and cut in the line, so likewise the now, when it makes time through its motion, is a connective now (*ān wāṣil*), whereas if its occurrence is imposed on continuous time, then it is a dividing now (*ān fāṣil*). (f) But a significant group of ancient philosophers say that time is an eternal substance necessary of existence

11 See *al-Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:76; v.7, 5:87f.; v.8, 5:90f.; as well as *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, 11.8, 2:127, 2:144, and 2:148f. See the report of the debate with Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā given by yet another al-Rāzī—Abū Ḥatīm al-Rāzī—in *The Proofs of Prophecy*, with Plato mentioned as the source for the theory at 16.

12 We find a view along these lines in the *Harmony of the Two Sages* ascribed to al-Fārābī; see al-Fārābī, *L'armonia delle opinioni dei due sapienti*, 63.18–64.1.

in itself, independent in both its essence and its existence both of the sphere and of motion. Through its motion, the sphere simply measures the parts of [time], just as a water clock (*finjāna*) measures the parts of night and day with its various conditions. They further say that when any motions occur within this self-subsistent substance and measure the extension of its persistence (*dawām*), then because of these motions it is called time (*zamān*); but if it is without any association to motions, and no alterations occur within it, then it is called everlastingness, permanence, or eternity (*dahr, azal, sarmad*).

In his *Mabāḥith* and *Mulakhkhaṣ*, Fakhr al-Dīn's division of available options is less comprehensive but more systematic than the list just quoted here from the late *Maṭālib*.¹³ In the *Mabāḥith*, and similarly in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, he states that there are four possible positions: time is either a substance (*jawhar*) or an accident (*ʿaraḍ*), and if it is a substance then it is either (i) an incorporeal or (ii) a corporeal substance, and if it is an accident, it is either (iii) motion or (iv) some accident other than motion.¹⁴ There is no way to accommodate Abū l-Barakāt's view (b) and that of al-Jubbā'ī (d) in this scheme, unless one were to mention them under (iv) together with some other theories, which, however, Fakhr al-Dīn does not do. What is more, in his early works he does not mention the flow of the now (f) as an option for the essence of time, although he discusses the idea in the chapters on time's existence and on the relation between time and the now. The *Maṭālib*, on the other hand, omits view (ii) that time is the body (as opposed to the motion) of the heavenly sphere.

In the *Mabāḥith*, he goes through objections to options (i), (ii), and (iii) and subdivides option (iv) into two sub-options: either time is the magnitude of motion, as held by the "Shaykh" (i.e. Avicenna), or time is that of which some part is before and another is after, which explains why something can be said to be before, after, or simultaneous with some other thing. This latter view likewise derives from Avicenna, even though it is not explicitly attributed to him.¹⁵ Fakhr al-Dīn does not indicate whether he regards the two sub-options as compatible, as Avicenna did, or as two opposing, but nonetheless possible, ways to conceive of the essence of time. He does say, however, that option (iv) constitutes "the truth" about time (*al-ḥaqq fīhi*), whereas the other three

13 We would like to express our gratitude to Y. Tzvi Langermann, who kindly provided us with a copy of the Tehran manuscript of the *Mulakhkhaṣ* listed in the bibliography.

14 See *al-Mabāḥith*, II.1.5.64, 1:765f.; *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, II.1.5.4.2, L: 168r/T: 154.

15 See Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing*, II.11, §4f.

options are discredited as “false teachings” (*al-madhāhib al-fāsida*).¹⁶ This remark may seem to be an unambiguous endorsement of option (iv)—which would be quite puzzling, since it is at variance with his earlier announcement in the *Mabāḥith* itself that he does not yet know “the truth about time” (*al-ḥaqq fī l-zamān*).¹⁷ On closer inspection, though, the remark endorsing option (iv) turns out to be just a near-quotation from Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing*, 11.10, §13. The endorsement, thus, simply results from the *Mabāḥith*’s approach of compiling material from Avicenna. Indeed, the chapter immediately following this remark begins with an unacknowledged literal quotation from the discussion of time in Avicenna’s *al-Najāt*.

In the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, Fakhr al-Dīn finds fault with the way Avicenna derived the existence (and the eternity) of time from the need to explain the beforeness and afterness that we find in things that come-to-be.¹⁸ He goes on to explain how Avicenna argued for option (iv), that time is the magnitude of motion, and concludes the discussion with the following statement:

Sharḥ al-Ishārāt, 11.5.5, 2:403: Know that, about their assertion that time is among the accidents of motion, we have severe misgivings (*ishkālāt qawīyya*) which we have reported in the book *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*.

Obviously then, we must turn to the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, where we see that Fakhr al-Dīn attributes option (iv) not to Avicenna but to “Aristotle and some contemporaries”. After a long and critical investigation, Fakhr al-Dīn not only dismisses options (i), (ii) and (iii), as he did in the *Mabāḥith*, but also directly rejects option (iv).¹⁹ Finally he concludes the entire discussion as follows:

al-Mulakhkhaṣ, 11.1.5.4.2, L: 170v/T: 156–57: This is a concise exposition (*mulakhkhaṣ*) of what, it seems to me, is said about time. Perhaps the most compelling (*wa-laʿalla l-aqrab*) is to say that there is no meaning to time other than the occurrence of some things that come-to-be with

16 *al-Mabāḥith*, 11.1.5.64, 1:768.

17 *al-Mabāḥith*, 11.1.5.63, 1:761f., quoted below, p. 119.

18 See the discussion in Mayer, “Avicenna against Time Beginning”.

19 We have said that in the *Mabāḥith*, Fakhr al-Dīn subdivided option (iv). The same subdivision is also found in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, even though in a different way. While we find Fakhr al-Dīn rejecting only the first subdivision in the chapter on the essence of time (11.1.5.4.2), he has already expressed his doubts about the second subdivision during his discussion of the existence of time in the preceding chapter (11.1.5.4.1); see *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 11.1.5.4.1, B: 166r–v L: 167v–168r/T: 154.

others or before them or after them, for this beforeness and afterness (even if they are understood as being distinct from that to which they are ascribed) are nonetheless items of consideration (*al-umūr al-i'tibāriyya*).

This conclusion leaves Fakhr al-Dīn at a loss. None of the four available candidates for the essence of time has been able to withstand his rigorous analysis. Consequently he retreats to the minimalist position that time, whatever it may be, is experienced in the mind as the source for the before and after of temporal things.

The result of the fifty pages of Fakhr al-Dīn's later discussion in the *Maṭālib* is distinctly less aporetic. This time, he goes through the available options set out in the text quoted above, and endorses option (f), that time is an independent substance. As we shall see, this option is then combined with the flowing now of option (e) to account for the fact that time is experienced as elapsing or flowing. Characteristically, though, Fakhr al-Dīn devotes considerable space to refuting the rejected options. Not all receive equal attention. The theory of Abū l-Barakāt, for example, is dispatched rather briskly:

al-Maṭālib, v.6, 5:75: If he means that time is the measure of the extension of existence, then this is false. For the extension of existence is an expression for the remaining, persistence, and continuance of the thing. This remaining and persistence are either something additional to that which itself remains (*'alā dhāt al-bāqī*), or not. But the remaining and persistence of each thing is an attribute that subsists through it. Also, the remaining and persistence of each thing is not the remaining or persistence of something else. So if time were understood in this way, it would follow that there would be a number of times gathered together in this single hour, given the number of things that are remaining in this hour. But we have shown that the claim that many times are gathered together all at once is absurd.

One reason Fakhr al-Dīn can be so quick with the idea is that, as he here mentions, he has already posed what he sees as a devastating objection to any theory that makes time supervenient on a multiply-instantiated phenomenon. The problem is that there will be a distinct time for each instantiation, including instantiations that are simultaneous—but one cannot have two distinct, yet simultaneous, times. Applying this to Abū l-Barakāt's view, the point will be that if you and I are both existing now, then there would be one time that measures the extension of your existence, and another time that measures the extension of my existence. These two times would, absurdly, be different

from one another yet simultaneous. Aristotelian-style accounts of time that tie it to motion have the same problem, since two distinct motions can occur simultaneously.²⁰

In English one could phrase the objection nicely by saying that the accounts of Abū l-Barakāt and Aristotle would make two *different* times occur at the *same* time. In Fakhr al-Dīn's view this is absurd in itself, but he also provides a further rationale to be on the safe side: it would lead to an infinite regress.²¹ For suppose that there are two times happening simultaneously, t_1 and t_2 , which are supervening on two simultaneous motions, or in the case of Abū l-Barakāt's theory on the existence of two simultaneous entities. In this case, there would need to be a third time t_3 at which t_1 and t_2 are occurring (t_3 would be "encompassing" (*muḥīt*) t_1 and t_2). By a similar reasoning one would need t_4 to explain the simultaneity of all three times, and so on. There is, however, an obvious way to avoid these problems. One could single out a particular entity or event, making it alone the supervenience base for time. This, of course, is exactly the move made by options (a) and (c), which associate time with the outermost celestial sphere's motion and not with motions in general.

We may be surprised to see Fakhr al-Dīn confidently describing this as the position of Aristotle. What we all learned in our undergraduate courses on him is that Aristotle defines time as "the number ($\alpha\rho\iota\theta\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$) of motion in respect of priority and posteriority".²² But further on in the *Physics*, Aristotle does draw a particular link between time and the heavenly motion:

Aristotle *Phys.* 223b18–23 (Hardie/Gaye trans., modified): If, then, what is first is the measure of everything homogeneous with it, regular circular motion is above all else the measure, because the number of this is the best known. Now neither alteration nor increase nor coming into being can be regular, but locomotion can be. This also is why time is thought to be the motion of the sphere, viz. because the other motions are measured by this, and time by this motion.

Notice that here, Aristotle suggests that time actually *is* the motion of the sphere, rather than the *measure* of that motion. This motion would, in turn, measure time and also other motions. Thus we can see Fakhr al-Dīn's ascription of option (a) to Aristotle as a kind of compromise between this passage

20 This line of argument is also a recurring theme in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, 11.1.5.4.2, L: 169v/T: 156 and the *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, 11.8, e.g., 2:128, 2:140–43, and 2 150.

21 *al-Maṭālib*, v.4, 5:53.

22 *Physics*, IV.11, 220a25.

and the general official definition at 220a25: time is indeed a number or measure of motion but only of one particular motion.

Of course this interpretation is not original with Fakhr al-Dīn. Despite the possible hesitancy of the passage just cited, in which Aristotle only says that time “seems” (δοκεῖ) to be the motion of the sphere, whose regular motion is “above all” (μάλιστα) a measure, later Aristotelian thinkers strongly endorsed the link between heavenly motion and time. Especially significant in this regard is an essay on the topic of time composed by Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. ca. 200), lost in Greek but still extant in Arabic.²³ This treatise begins by dismissing several false views of time, one of which identifies time with the motions of the sphere.²⁴ Alexander apparently said in his lost *Physics* commentary that this is the view of Plato, but that is not mentioned here in *On Time*.²⁵ When he comes to set out his positive view, Alexander states that time is “the number of the motion of the sphere, rather than any other motion, simply because there is no motion faster than it”.²⁶ He goes on to explain that we measure everything by what is less than it, for instance a plurality of things by the unit.²⁷ The point he wants to make is that the fastest motion should give us the smallest time measurement for other motions.²⁸ There is, then, good pedigree for Fakhr al-Dīn's characterization of this as Aristotle's understanding of the quiddity of time.

But pedigree is not everything, and Fakhr al-Dīn argues at length that the “Aristotelian” account is unsuccessful. In fact he offers no fewer than fifteen arguments to this effect. This matches the critical attitude we observe in his *Mulakhkhaṣ*, in which he devises not fifteen but eight arguments against the Aristotelian position all of which reappear among, or are worked into, the fifteen arguments of the *Maṭālib*. We will here concentrate on the first of these

23 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Time*, translated by Robert W. Sharples from the edition of the medieval Latin translation edited by Gabriel Théry. Sharples also takes account of the Arabic version with assistance from Fritz Zimmermann. The Arabic text has been edited by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī. We will cite the treatise by section number from Sharples' translation together with page numbers from Badawī.

24 Alexander, *On Time*, §3, Badawī 19; see Aristotle's own critical discussion of these views in *Physics*, IV.10. Incidentally Alexander already gives an argument along the lines of what we just saw in al-Rāzī concerning multiple simultaneous times, to rule out the identification of time with the celestial sphere (because there is more than one sphere but not multiple times at the same moment: §2, Badawī 19).

25 Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor priores commentaria*, 700, cited by Sharples in his notes to Alexander, *On Time*, 60, fn. 6.

26 Alexander, *On Time*, §10, Badawī 21.

27 This idea has fairly good Aristotelian support; see Coope, *Time for Aristotle*, 103f.

28 The point is restated in Alexander, *On Time*, §15, Badawī 21f.

arguments from the *Maṭālib*, which is an elaborate version of the second objection in the *Mulakhkhaṣ* and includes an interesting reflection on Avicenna.²⁹ As is typical for Fakhr al-Dīn the argument proceeds through a process of elimination. The celestial motion sets down a “requirement” (*iftiqār*) for time, which may or may not be due to the very fact that it is a motion.³⁰ But it must have to do with its being a motion, because by their very nature motions do not exist as a whole but consist in transitions from one state into another. Thus motion as such requires time. This being the case, there are three options: “either (i) time occurs to (*yaḥṣulu li-*) each individual motion separately, or (ii) one and the same time occurs to all [motions], or (iii) time does not occur to any motion.”³¹ We have already seen the rationale he uses against (i): there would be multiple simultaneous times. Against (ii) he argues that if time is an accident, it cannot as such belong to multiple subjects.³² That leaves only (iii): time does not, as the Aristotelian position would have it, depend on motion at all.³³

Having shown that the definition of time entails the existence of multiple times, Fakhr al-Dīn summons Avicenna onto the stage. He provides a long quote from *The Physics* of the *Healing*, where Avicenna is dealing directly with the problem that there will be as many times as there are motions.³⁴ For time is not dependent on motions that begin and end, but only on one eternal motion—that is, the motion of the heavenly sphere:

29 *al-Maṭālib*, v.4, 5:52–67; for the first argument 5:52–57; *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, II.1.5.4.2, L: 169vf./T: 156; *al-Mabāḥiṭh* does not mention it; the *Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma* contains various remarks to the same effect throughout the commentary on the chapter on time.

30 One could take his point to be that motion *presupposes* time, so that time must be assumed to be metaphysically prior to motion. Indeed this will be his eventual positive view. For the purposes of the present argument though, it is sufficient to understand him to be making the more minimal claim that motion requires us to posit time—which would be consistent with the dependence of time on motion assumed by the Aristotelian/Avicennan view he is presently criticizing. In the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, Fakhr al-Dīn uses the participles *muftaqira* and *mustad’iya* to describe motion’s need for time.

31 *al-Maṭālib*, v.4, 5:53.

32 A further argument given is more complicated (*al-Maṭālib*, v.4, 5:53f.): according to option (ii) time’s existence would be parasitic on the existence of the various motions. So if we supposed one of those motions not to exist, while another did still exist, then time would both not exist and exist while remaining one; an absurdity.

33 See also *Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, II.8, 2:138–42 and 2:149f.

34 See Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing*, II.13, §2, and one sentence in the middle of §3 (252.4–7 of the Arabic text) which we quote next (Fakhr al-Dīn does not quote the sentence in full).

Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing*, 2.13, §3 (McGinnis trans.): Hence, the existence of time is dependent upon (*muta'alliq bi-*) a single motion that it measures and, equally, the rest of the motions whose existence would be impossible without the motion of the body that, through its motion, produces (*fā'il*) time (except in the act of the estimative faculty). That is like the measure existing in some body that measures [that body] as well as whatever is parallel and juxtaposed to it.

Along with some pot-calling-the-kettle-black complaints about how long-winded Avicenna has been in this context, Fakhr al-Dīn summarizes the up-shot of this argument as follows:

al-Maṭālib, v.4, 5:55: Why does he not just say that time is an expression for the measure of [only one] specific (*mu'ayyana*) motion? Then, if that motion is originally measured by that measure, subsequently all other motions could be measured by that time through mediation of the measurement of that motion by that measure.

To fill out the analogy proposed by Avicenna, we could refer to the example of the international prototype meter, which was a unique physical object (a metal bar) kept in France.³⁵ Until 1960, when the definition was changed, the meter length was primarily “dependent upon” this prototype bar. Accordingly, physical objects which were one meter long would have been measured against this bar. Similarly, Avicenna proposes, the celestial sphere “produces time” through its unending circular motion. The resulting time would be primarily the measure of its circular motion, but other, finite motions would elapse over time-spans which correspond to, and are thus measured by, parts of this primary motion and its time.

Fakhr al-Dīn takes himself already to have ruled out Avicenna's response, with his previous argument that all motion *as such* poses a demand for time. This “need is equally present in all motions ... so one cannot say that that time belongs to certain motions and not others”.³⁶ Putting the point in terms of our analogy with length, one might say that any extended body as such creates a “demand” or “requirement” for length, as it occupies a space that has a certain length. Of course the length of the meter-long stick in the garden is not brought about by a standard prototype in France. All that the prototype does

35 Fakhr al-Dīn gives a similar example, though without referring to France, at *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, II.8, 2 143; in his case the standard of measurement is a piece of wood.

36 *al-Maṭālib*, v.4, 5:55f., alluding back to 5:52f.

is define an arbitrary demarcation of certain lengths as “meters”. Fakhr al-Dīn could, and probably would, say that this demarcation is something that applies only at the level of mental existence, whereas the length of the stick in the garden still exists concretely as an accident of the stick. Likewise, if I take a day-long journey, the time demanded for the journey to elapse is not produced by the celestial motion. The celestial motion just makes it convenient for us to measure journeys, events, and other things in days.

While this looks like a convincing response, it does not take account of Avicenna’s point that without the motion of the celestial sphere, there would be no other motion at all.³⁷ In that sense the celestial motion does indeed produce other times, through the intermediacy of producing the motions themselves. However, Fakhr al-Dīn offers a further argument against Avicenna:

1. If time is the measure of a motion, this must mean it is the measure of that motion’s extension (*intidād*).
2. A motion’s extension is its persistence (*baqāʾ*; *istimrār*; *dawām*).
3. The persistence of something belongs to that thing and nothing else.
4. The measure of the persistence belongs to the persistence as one of its qualities (*kayfiyyāt*).

Therefore time belongs to each motion, not to anything else (e.g. another motion).³⁸

This looks like a better response, because it invokes the sort of metaphysical commitments Avicenna too might be inclined to accept. Even if other motions are caused by the primary celestial motion, every motion has a persistence which belongs *to that motion* as one of its attributes. Since time is (on the Aristotelian theory, as construed in premise 1) just a measure of this persistence, the time of each motion must likewise belong to that motion and not some other motion.

Fakhr al-Dīn’s argument can be more easily understood if we understand *miqdār*, as Avicenna has done, primarily as a magnitude within the category of quantity, and not strictly speaking as a measure.³⁹ Here he is in good

37 See Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing*, II.13, §3 and III.14, §1–7; see in particular also the argument in *ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, II.8–9, 2 28f. See now also Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, 492–509.

38 See *al-Maṭālib*, v.4, 5:56.

39 Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, 443–51. The difference between magnitude and measure may be exemplified by saying that we talk about a *magnitude* when we say that a body has a size or that a journey has a duration, whereas we talk about a *measure*

company. Already Alexander defined time as a “duration” (*mudda*) and Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī explained time as a duration by means of the word *imtidād* (“extension”).⁴⁰ Avicenna, too, stressed that time is primarily an indicator of the extension or the temporal size of a motion from its first to its last moment. Finally, Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī defined time as the magnitude of the extension of some thing’s existence.⁴¹ This seems to have inspired Fakhr al-Dīn’s present argument. As we saw, Fakhr al-Dīn thinks that by “extension”, Abū l-Barakāt should mean the *persistence* of a thing’s existence (we find overlapping terminology in both cases: *imtidād*, *baqā’*, etc.). Fakhr al-Dīn also explicitly states that the persistence of something is an attribute in that thing. By applying these ideas to the Avicennan defense of the “Aristotelian” theory, Fakhr al-Dīn gets the same result that refuted Abū l-Barakāt’s account: since the measure (or magnitude) of anything belongs to that thing, there will be as many measures as things measured, and hence many times simultaneously existing at one and the same time. Fakhr al-Dīn suggests that the opponent could attempt to escape by saying that time is not actually the measure of each motion’s persistence, but something *required* for that measure.⁴² However, this would be to concede defeat by abandoning the original definition. Besides which, what is necessary for the occurrence of motions that are in themselves contingent is whatever would render them necessary—but for Avicenna that is, ultimately, God. So this escape would identify time with God.

Fakhr al-Dīn’s critique of the Aristotelian/Avicennan position continues on from here at considerable further length. But we have seen enough to put our finger on what dissatisfies him about it. On the one hand, a definition of time which makes time supervenient on motion entails the unfavorable consequence that time is supervenient on *every* motion. Avicenna’s claim that motion produces time suggests that *every* motion brings about time, not that it supervenes on one favored motion to the exclusion of all others. Yet if time supervenes on all motions then there will be just as many times as there are motions, and this is absurd. These problems can be avoided by reversing the Avicennan position, and saying that motion is dependent on time, rather than

when we say that body has the volume of three cubic meters and that journey took the time of two days. A magnitude, in other words, is something which is, or could be, measured.

40 See Alexander, *On Time*, §8, Badawī 20; Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, *Maqāla fī l-mawjūdāt*, 273.2–6.

41 For the position of Abū l-Barakāt’s account of time within the discussion of his *al-Mu’tabar*, see now Lammer, “Two Sixth/Twelfth-Century Hardliners”, 269–72.

42 *al-Maṭālib*, v.4, 5:57.

time on motion.⁴³ The attractiveness of this view was already made clear in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, as part of the argument against the Aristotelian claim that our awareness of time is due to our awareness of motion:

al-Mulakhkhaṣ, 11.1.5.4.2, L: 169r–v/T: 155: We do not accept that someone who sleeps is unaware of time, merely because he is unaware of motion. Rather, sleep prevents the awareness of both together. In fact, it is the other way around. For someone who sits in a dark house with no awareness of any motion is nonetheless aware of time ... If we posit that all motions stop existing, we know by necessity that this non-existence inevitably occurs after existence, and this afterness is by time. So, the mind cannot refrain from conceptualizing time even if the absence of motion is posited in it. This is quite persuasive.

In this passage, Fakhr al-Dīn is inspired by a thought experiment that was probably invented by Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, which is also treated in the section on time's existence in the *Maṭālib*.⁴⁴ Fakhr al-Dīn additionally argues that one can posit the non-existence of all motion but not the non-existence of time. For any posited non-existence of motion would have to occur “after” its existence. The mere postulation of the absence of any motion therefore requires a temporal framework in which notions such as “before” and “after” remain meaningful even in the absence of motion. This would be impossible on any account according to which time comes to be through, and is dependent on, motion. As he repeatedly emphasizes also in other objections to the Aristotelian-Avicennan position—in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, the *Maṭālib*, and *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*—Fakhr al-Dīn is convinced that any awareness of motion presupposes an awareness of time.

43 See Fakhr al-Dīn's assertion in *al-Maṭālib*, v.3, 5:45: “It is, thus, established that motion, for the realization of its essence, is dependent upon time”. This assertion forms the basis for many of his criticisms not only in the *Mulakhkhaṣ* but also in *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*. See for a good example his discussion of Avicenna's claim that “motion is the cause for the occurrence of time” at *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, 11.8, 2:149f. Fakhr al-Dīn's primary reason for suggesting that motion depends on time rather than the other way around is that he conceives of motion as something that requires and presupposes time (e.g., *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, 11.8, 2:139f. and 2:142).

44 *al-Maṭālib*, v.2, 5:21f. and 5:26f.; see also Adamson, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Existence of Time”.

2 Fakhr al-Dīn's Own View about Time's Essence

The solution, from Fakhr al-Dīn's point of view, is to abandon the idea that time supervenes on motion or on anything else that is multiply instantiated. Rather, time is metaphysically independent. This is, of course, view (f) on Fakhr al-Dīn's list of options. When he takes up this position again he phrases it more concisely as follows: time is "a substance subsisting in itself and independent in itself" (*jawhar qā'im bi-nafsihi wa-mustaqill bi-dhātihī*).⁴⁵ He affirms his preference for this view, saying that it is "the most compelling (*aqrab*) of the statements that have been mentioned concerning the quiddity of time and its reality". He also puts a name to the theory, saying it is the brainchild of "Imām Plato" (*al-imām Aflātūn*) and a page later expressing his preference for the theory of "the divine Plato" over that of "Aristotle the logician".⁴⁶ The contrast between this "Platonic" view of time and that of Avicenna could hardly be more stark. Whereas Avicenna wrote that time is "not something subsisting in itself", since "if there is neither a motion nor a change, there is no time",⁴⁷ Fakhr al-Dīn now accepts the view that time is indeed self-subsistent and thus has no metaphysical dependence on changing things.

Why ascribe this notion to Plato, though?⁴⁸ After all, the *Timaeus* says that the Demiurge created time as a "moving image of eternity" when he was setting it in order, and that "before the heavens came to be, there were no days or nights, no months or years".⁴⁹ Shortly thereafter Plato adds that the heavenly bodies were fashioned "in order that time might be generated" (ἵνα γεννηθῇ χρόνος).⁵⁰ As already mentioned, Fakhr al-Dīn could look to the precedent of the earlier al-Rāzī for the association of self-subsistent time with Plato. At least part of the explanation for this has to do with Galen, whose paraphrase of the *Timaeus* was the version of that dialogue known in Arabic, and who is reported in numerous Arabic sources to have himself asserted the self-subsistence and self-evidence of time.⁵¹ It seems that for Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, for his version of Plato, and for Galen as understood in the Arabic reception, time

45 *al-Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:76; see v.7, 5:87f.

46 See also the concluding statement in *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, 11.8, 2:148f. and earlier on 2:127 and 2:144. In the *Maṭālib*, he further mentions that he finds Plato more convincing on the topic of place, too, which will be the next major topic after the discussion of time.

47 Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing*, 11.11, §6.

48 See also Lammer, "Time and Mind-Dependence in Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī's *Abkār al-aḳār*", esp. 102–11.

49 *Timaeus* 37d–e, tr. Zeyl.

50 *Timaeus* 38c.

51 See further Adamson, "Galen and al-Rāzī on Time".

itself is not generated by the heavens or their motions. Rather, time is in itself ontologically independent, and is only *measured* or *revealed* (to speak with Plotinus) by the heavenly motions, which we use to demarcate an otherwise undivided continuity into segments.⁵² These segments are for instance years, days, and hours, which is why Plato said in the *Timaeus* that such time measurements did not exist before the heavens came to be. This is not an outrageous reading of Plato, since some sort of temporal extension does seem to precede time as ordered or measured by heavenly motions. Indeed, *Timaeus* speaks of the situation of the pre-cosmic receptacle and even says that motions were occurring in this situation.⁵³ On this theory we can speak of time in two different senses: what Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā called “absolute time”, which is independent of motion, and the kind of time at stake when we demarcate absolute time with the help of heavenly motions.⁵⁴ It would be the latter sort of ordered or demarcated time that *Timaeus* has in mind when he says that time is generated by the heavenly motions.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī similarly contrasts time (*zamān*) as related to motion or change to time considered as “duration” (*mudda*) or “eternity” (*dahr*). Towards understanding this contrast, we should turn to an objection he raises against the claim that time is self-subsistent.⁵⁵ How can time be a self-subsisting substance, argues the objector, given that time is “something in flux, constantly renewed in its existence” (*shay’ sayyāl mutajaddid al-wujūd*)? In the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, this very objection successfully defeats the “Platonic” view that time is a self-subsisting substance and a necessarily existing requirement for the occurrence of motion. Fakhr al-Dīn’s verdict is emphatic:

al-Mulakhkhaṣ, II.1.5.4.2, L: 168r–v/T: 154: Know that this account is false (*bāṭila*), because if time is not elapsing, then today would be the same as all other days and all that comes to be in all other days would be that which comes to be today and vice versa. This is downright false. If, on the other hand, it is elapsing, it is impossible that it is a necessary existent.

The greatest flaw of the Platonic position as presented in the *Mulakhkhaṣ* is that a necessarily existing time would fail to explain why today is different from the day of the Flood and, indeed, from any other day. If time were a necessary, incorporeal, and stationary substance, it would follow that the past, the

52 For Plotinus, see *Enneads*, III.7.12, esp. 40–52.

53 *Timaeus* 30a.

54 Cf. also Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, fn. 99, 458.

55 *al-Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:76.

present, and the future are all one and the same, because time is always one and the same. If, on the other hand, we allow time to be elapsing (*mutaqaḍḍin*) and to be constantly renewed (*mutajaddid*), then it can no longer be a self-subsistent and unchanging substance. What Fakhr al-Dīn presents in his late works, then, is a developed version of the "Platonic" position, which is now able to overcome this objection. He writes in the *Maṭālib* that the defender of the "Platonic" view should respond to the objection as follows:

al-Maṭālib, v.6, 5:76: Why can one not say that [time] is a remaining, eternal, everlasting substance, and that when things come to be, those things that come to be successively have some association (*muqārana*) to it? In that case, what follows from the obtaining of alteration and change will be the obtaining of alteration and change in the relations (*nisab*) that that substance bears towards those things that come to be. The flux and change are nothing that obtains with respect to time itself (*fi dhāt al-zamān*) or in its substance; rather, they obtain with respect to its relation to successive things that come to be.⁵⁶

Like Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn draws a distinction between time in itself, and time insofar as it is experienced and applied to changing things. His distinction is formulated rather differently, though. Instead of speaking about demarcated segments of time produced by the heavenly bodies, he talks more generally about time *as related to* changing things.

The reason for this becomes clear in a later *faṣl* of the *Maṭālib*'s treatment of time, where Fakhr al-Dīn comes to the topic of "everlastingness and eternity" (*dahr* and *sarmad*) and how they relate to time.⁵⁷ He begins the *faṣl* as follows:

al-Maṭālib, v.8, 5:89: *Al-Shaykh al-Ra'īs* mentions in many of his books that the consideration of the states of changes (*i'tibār aḥwāl al-taghayyurāt*) along with things that change is time (*al-zamān*), the consideration of stable things (*thābita*) along with things that change is everlastingness (*al-dahr*), and the consideration of the states of stable things is eternity (*al-sarmad*). This is what we see him saying in his books, but we do not find him adding any proof or explanation of these distinctions.

56 For a similar argument to the effect that change and motion do not occur in time itself but in the things that undergo change and motion, see *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, 11.8, 2:127 and also 2:146.

57 *al-Maṭālib*, v.8, 5:89–91; this discussion was already promised at v.4, 5:63.12–14.

Fakhr al-Dīn knows this doctrine for instance from Avicenna's *ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* (cited explicitly in the following discussion) and *The Healing*.⁵⁸ It seems to find favor with Fakhr al-Dīn, despite his complaint about the inadequacy of Avicenna's explanations.⁵⁹ The problem Fakhr al-Dīn sees is that Avicenna has not clarified whether time, everlastingness, and eternity are just relations—so that time for instance would be the relation between changing things and other changing things—or are something else on which these relations supervene. If the former, then Avicenna would unwittingly have given a different account of the quiddity of time, as a relation between changing things as opposed to the measure of the celestial motion.⁶⁰ But if the latter, we are compelled now to investigate the metaphysical status of everlastingness and eternity.⁶¹

Fakhr al-Dīn concludes that the best answer to this question is that everlastingness (*dahr*) is in itself unchanging, but has a "requirement" (*īqtidāʾ*) for an extrinsic relation to what changes. But if that is what Avicenna wants to say, Fakhr al-Dīn replies, then "this is just the same as the teaching of Plato, namely that time is a substance subsisting in itself and independent in itself".⁶² This dialectical victory in hand, Fakhr al-Dīn broadens the perspective to time or duration (*mudda*) in general. It is, as Plato said, a real existent that subsists independently in itself, an understanding that will be reasserted in a kind of philosophical lexicon that ends the treatment of time in the *Maṭālib*.⁶³ However,

58 See *ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, 11.8, 28.12–17, and *The Physics of the Healing*, 11.13, §7. We should remind ourselves that Fakhr al-Dīn was working on his *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* roughly at the same time he was composing the sections on time in the *Maṭālib*; see his discussion in *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, 11.8, 2:145–49.

59 The Safavid thinker Mir Dāmād drew on the same passages in Avicenna to develop the idea of perpetual creation (*ḥudūth dahrī*); see Rahman, "Mir Damad's Concept of *Ḥudūth Dahrī*" and Rizvi, "Between Time and Eternity".

60 See *al-Maṭālib*, v.4, 5:63: "The relation of the changing (*al-mutaḥayyir*) to the changing is time (*zamān*), the relation of the changing to the unchanging (*al-thābit*) is everlastingness (*dahr*), and the relation of the unchanging to the unchanging is eternity (*sarmad*)".

61 *al-Maṭālib*, v.8, 5:89f.

62 *al-Maṭālib*, v.8, 5:91; we find an identical remark in the *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, 11.8, 2:148.

63 *al-Maṭālib*, v.11, 5:103–7, esp. 5:103f.: "Know that we explained time by saying that it is existent, in itself and in its existence dispensing with any need for (*ghaniʾan*) motion. Rather, it occurs (*ḥāṣil*) whether or not motion occurs. In light of this, we say that motion has no effect on the existence of duration or time. Motion has an effect only on its measurement (*taqdīr*) and delimitation (*taḥdīd*), just as water clocks (*binkānāt*) and other instruments measure the duration of the day and its parts and subdivisions. The water clock has no effect on the generation or production of the day, but only on the measurement of its parts and subdivisions. Likewise here, the motion of the sphere has no effect on the production of duration, but only on the measurement of duration. And duration is measured only through the celestial motion, not by other motions, because it is the fastest motion and

the word “time” (*zamān*) is ambiguous, for Fakhr al-Dīn accepts that the word can be used to refer specifically to “the consideration of the states of changes along with things that change”, as Avicenna had put it. To avoid confusion between these two senses of the word “time”—on the one hand independent and in itself unchanging, on the other hand as involving a reference to changing things—we will henceforth refer to independent time as “duration” and use the word “time” only when a relation to changing things is at stake.⁶⁴

As to the elapsing character of time, this is precisely what the connection with changing things entails. We should remember that Plato made time the “moving image of eternity”. The Neoplatonic tradition, and in particular John Philoponus, sought to establish a harmony between the views of Plato and Aristotle. Philoponus made use of Alexander’s interpretation of Aristotle that time is the result of a flowing now.⁶⁵ For Philoponus, this explains how the now could be both always the same and always different, as Aristotle had emphasized.⁶⁶ Thus, the Platonic and the Aristotelian theories of time come together in the notion of a now which produces time through its flow.⁶⁷ Fakhr al-Dīn incorporates this idea into his account, and uses it to illustrate the relationship between duration and time. To that end, he distinguishes between two kinds of “nows”, one posterior to the existence of time and another prior to it. The former is the now which divides time and which is the result of time’s existence as something continuous, for everything that is a continuous quantity (*kamm muttaṣil*) is divisible. By means of this now, we can demarcate certain time spans and posit certain moments just as when we say that we traveled from noon until midnight or when we say that we met when the sun reached its highest point. All these divisions of time are merely potential, and do not actually separate time.⁶⁸ The other now, however, is prior to the existence of time (*mutaqaddim ‘alā wujūd al-zamān*), and is not potential but actual.

the least varying. Surely then this motion is what measures duration”. Notice the concession made here to the Aristotelian view: once we are in the business of demarcating time, we use the fastest motion to do so, namely the motion of the celestial sphere.

64 Fakhr al-Dīn himself is evidently aware of the potential confusion. When he discusses time in the sense of an unchanging and independent substance, he tends to speak of “*zamān* and *mudda*” instead of merely *zamān*, or he simply uses the term *dahr*. On the etymology of *zamān* and *dahr*, and their overlapping meanings, see Tamer, *Zeit und Gott*, esp. 51–68.

65 Alexander, *On Time*, §13, Badawī 21.

66 *Physics*, IV.10, 219b10–15.

67 See in particular McGinnis, “For Every Time There is a Season”, and ch. 6 of his unpublished dissertation *Time and Time Again*.

68 In this Fakhr al-Dīn follows Avicenna and Avicenna followed Aristotle; see *Physics*, IV.11, 219a10–13, for Aristotle and *al-Najāt*, 11.2.9, 231.5f., for Avicenna.

Here, Fakhr al-Dīn is talking about the production of time itself. He argues that an actually existing now flows through an unchanging duration, thus producing time alongside duration, just as we might say that a point through its motion and flow produces a line alongside, or on, a sheet of paper.⁶⁹

In his earlier *Mabāḥith*, Fakhr al-Dīn already expressed his preference for the view that time is the result of a flowing now, but he applied this only to time's concrete *existence* in the external world (*al-amr al-wujūdī fī l-khārij*), and did not relate the flowing now to the issue of time's *essence*.⁷⁰ The *Maṭālib*, by contrast, states:

al-Maṭālib, v.7, 5:87f.: I say: their assertion that the now is something indivisible and that it produces time through its flow, [means] accepting that the now is something that subsists by itself and is independent by itself (*qā'imān bi-nafsihi wa-mustaqillan bi-dhātihi*). Therefore, it [sc. the now] produces time through its flow (*yaf'alu bi-sayalānihi l-zamān*) and this in itself is a return to the teaching of Plato that time is a self-subsisting substance. Therefore, through it there occur successive and consecutive relations to originating things. So, this is an acknowledgment of the truth about establishing duration and time, as Plato—but not as Aristotle—has related (*mā dhakarahu Aflāṭūn lā mā dhakarahu Aristāṭālīs*).⁷¹

As the now flows, it yields a single and consecutive order. Changing things may be said to be “before” and “after” because they happened at different moments, at different “nows” or “positions” which the now occupied during its flow and which have been ordered successively through the independent passage of the flowing now. Thus duration is not subject to change or motion—it is the arena, or as Fakhr al-Dīn will later say, the “locus” (*mawrid*) for change and for the flow of the now. As such *duration* is a necessary condition for changes and motions in the physical world, whereas *time*, on the other hand, is the continuous succession of before and after, which we experience as the now flows through this duration.

For all its advantages, the Platonic account of time as independent duration poses at least one significant problem: by making duration a self-subsisting entity, it threatens to put it on a par with God. This was evident already in the

69 *al-Maṭālib*, v.7, 5:87; see *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, II.8, 2 143.

70 *al-Mabāḥith*, II.1.5.63, 1:763f.; see also II.1.5.67, 1:786f.

71 Most of this passage is identical to *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, II.8, 2 144. For the theme of a “return to Plato”, see also *al-Maṭālib*, v.8, 5:91, which is again identical to *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, II.8, 2 148.

Mabāḥith and the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, where Fakhr al-Dīn argued that whenever we assume time to be abolished altogether, its assumed non-existence would have to occur *after* its existence.⁷² Thus the non-existence of time inevitably (and absurdly) entails the existence of time:

al-Mulakhkhaṣ, II.1.5.4.2, L: 168r/T: 154: Time exists, because when it is posited to be non-existent an absurdity follows from the sheer act of positing (*lazima l-muḥāl min mujarrad dhālika l-farḍ*) and whatever is like this is necessary through itself.⁷³

The Platonic theory of time therefore seems to have the unwanted consequence of making duration a necessary existent alongside God. This problem did not become pressing in the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, for there Fakhr al-Dīn rejected the Platonic view of time, perhaps precisely to avoid this consequence. But in the *Maṭālib*, where the Platonic theory is endorsed, Fakhr al-Dīn is forced to deal with this complication. He does so by distinguishing two “groups” among those who hold the Platonic thesis of time’s self-subsistence. One group insists that duration remains contingent in itself, because there is sufficient proof for God’s unique status: “the necessary existent through itself is nothing but one”.⁷⁴ Another group, however, indeed maintains that duration is a necessarily existent, and therefore divine, substance.

Four arguments are provided in support of the latter contention that duration is necessary in itself. The first is the one just mentioned, which already appeared in the earlier works: if duration were to become non-existent, it would have to do so after its existence. But then duration would turn out to exist even when supposed not to exist—a result which is characteristic of that which exists necessarily.⁷⁵ After the four proofs, Fakhr al-Dīn makes a further subdivision within this group: some believe that duration, being necessarily existent, really *is* the “God of this world”. Their rationale is that nothing can exist without existing at a time, so all existents depend on duration; but that upon which all existents depend is God. Duration in itself also has other features associated with God. It is for instance one and everlasting. Finally, there are religious sources that support the equation of the divine with duration, such as

⁷² See above, p. 108.

⁷³ See *al-Mabāḥith*, II.1.5.64, 1:766f.

⁷⁴ *al-Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:77. See further Mayer, “Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī’s Critique of Ibn Sīnā’s Argument for the Unity of God”.

⁷⁵ *al-Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:77f.

the Prophetic *ḥadīth* “God is *dahr*”.⁷⁶ The second sub-group evidently includes Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, though he is not mentioned by name, since this group’s position is explained in terms of five necessarily existing eternal things, one of which is time. For this group the “divine” attributes like unity and eternity do belong to duration in itself; but it is still to be distinguished from God, who possesses these attributes in a higher way.⁷⁷

Fakhr al-Dīn agrees with neither of these two positions. Rather, he accepts the first branch of the initial division, which denies duration’s necessary existence in order to safeguard God’s unique status: “the necessary existent through itself is one”.⁷⁸ Admittedly, duration is similar to God in that alteration and change do not happen to duration itself (*fī dhāt al-zamān*), just as they do not happen to God Himself but are extrinsic relations that successive things have to God.⁷⁹ Yet this does not mean that duration is equal to God in its necessary existence:

al-Maṭālib, v.6, 5:81: It is established that the Necessary of Existence through itself is necessary of existence in every respect. This rules out that He, exalted be He, is a locus (*mawrid*) of alterations and changes. Duration or time, however, is a locus for alterations and for changes through the fact that beforenesses or afternesses succeed one another (*tawārada*) in it. So, [time] is not the necessary of existence through itself in every respect and, thus, it is not the Necessary of Existence through itself. Rather it is possible of existence through itself. As for God, He exists as sanctified above alterations, exalted beyond any connection with what is potential.

76 *al-Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:80. This can be understood to mean that God is “fate”, rather than *dahr* in the sense of “everlastingness”. On the semantic range of *dahr* and its relation to the Greek αἰών, see Tamer, *Zeit und Gott*.

77 *al-Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:80.

78 *al-Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:81: *dallat al-dalā’il ‘alā anna wājib al-wujūd li-dhātihi wāhid*; compare 5:77: *lil-dalā’il al-dālā ‘alā anna wājib al-wujūd li-dhātihi laysa illā l-wāhid*.

79 Fakhr al-Dīn points to this similarity explicitly in *Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:76: “The change in these relations and relationships does not imply the occurrence of change or alteration in His essence, or in His true attributes. For He is the Necessary of Existence through itself, and is necessary of existence in all respects. If one understands this in the case of the true Necessary Existent, then why can one not understand something similar in the case of time itself and its substance?”

The difference between God and duration is that God is “necessary of existence in every respect”,⁸⁰ which rules out any association with change or potentiality. By contrast, duration is a “locus” for change, which apparently taints its existence with some degree of contingency.

Why should this be the case? To find the answer, we need to turn to another chapter of the *Maṭālib*, on the question of whether time is created or eternal.⁸¹ Unfortunately, this chapter contains no explicit answer to our question, but only a dialectical treatment of three alternative views. However, one of these views is the Platonic one, for which Fakhr al-Dīn has already declared his sympathy. And in describing this position, he writes:

al-Maṭālib, v.10, 5:100f.: Of those who maintain the eternity of *dahr* (*qidam al-dahr*) ... some say that duration (*al-mudda*) is a substance subsisting through itself and that its existence does not depend on the existence of motion ... [They further] say that from the eternity of *dahr* does not follow the eternity of motion. Rather *dahr* is a substance that is stable (*thābit*) in itself, for not one of the motions, alterations, or events is associated with it (*lam yuqārīnahu*), there being only a single persistence (*dawām*) and continuance (*istimrār*). Yet human intellects fall short of conceptualizing the mode (*kayfiyya*) of this persistence, because all we can grasp and understand with our intellects is two things. First, persistence in the sense of the succession of changing things (*taʿāqub al-ḥawādith*), the occurrence of one changing thing after another, and the presence of one moment after another. [All] this, however, is ascertained only on account of beforenesses and afternesses,⁸² and so persistence insofar as the intellect does *not* grasp it [i.e., persistence as such], is free from the blemish of alteration. Second, we understand all persistence only in a determinate moment, and whatever is like this is limited and finite. So, that which is infinite cannot be conceptualized by the mind at all. When successive states and alterations occur within duration (*mudda*), then duration is associated first with one of them and then with a second, and then a third. For this reason it is believed that the substance of duration and

80 This may seem a surprising remark to hear from an Ashʿarite, but Fakhr al-Dīn need not be saying that everything about God is necessary (as Avicenna held), only that His *existence* is entirely necessary. This would leave open, for instance, the possibility that God acts without necessity, as when He freely creates the universe.

81 *al-Maṭālib*, v.10, 5:99–101.

82 One manuscript adds *taghayyur*: “on account of the change of beforenesses and afternesses.”

time is something that is in itself in flux and in itself subject to alteration. But this is not the case. Alteration occurs only in the states that belong to it as extrinsic (*khārija*) to its quiddity (*māhiyya*), and in the relations that are accidental to its self (*fī l-iḍāfāt al-ʿarīḍa li-dhātihi*), because of its association with these changing things (*bi-sabab muqāranatihi li-tilka l-ḥawādith*).

This account fits quite well with other passages we have seen in the *Maṭālib*. Duration is associated with changing things, the “locus” of the flowing now, which may seem to show that time itself is changing. This impression is created by the fact that we only ever experience duration as time, that is, on the basis of the changes we observe in the world around us. But this is only a matter of our perspective: duration in itself is unchanging, and its relation to any particular change we may see is extrinsic and accidental.

Nonetheless, duration is not on a par with God. Though neither of them are intrinsically subject to change, God is not a “locus” or arena for change and does not even acquire an extrinsic “association” (*muqārana*) with changing things. One might object to this that if relation to change is extrinsic to duration, then it implies no contingency in duration’s existence: rather, the relation will be something additional and posterior to that existence. Fakhr al-Dīn does not seem to offer an explicit discussion of this objection, but his remarks suggest a possible response. While duration is independent of any particular relations to particular changes, it has by its very nature a potential for *being related* to changes. God is always one and the same, but duration has in itself beforenesses and afternesses, i.e. temporal positions through which the now passes as it flows, because it is an arena for the flowing now. As a consequence, duration is, one might say, intrinsically such as to acquire extrinsic relations. When God creates things that change, duration (i.e. “Platonic” time) duly realizes its potential to have such relations, resulting in the emergence of time (in the narrow sense). An analogy could be drawn to the case of a vessel, such as a cup: though it is no part of being a vessel to contain any particular contents, it is part of being a vessel that it is apt to contain some content or other.

In any case, Fakhr al-Dīn is consistent in holding that duration is causally dependent on God,⁸³ despite its independence and self-subsistence. His idea seems to be that God created duration in order to provide a framework for the other things He will create—this is what it means for duration to be a “locus for alterations”. Actually the *Maṭālib* does not go so far as to say that duration is “created”, but Fakhr al-Dīn asserts this in his famous commentary on the

83 *al-Maṭālib*, v.6, 5:77 and 5:81, quoted above.

Qur'ān, the *Maḥāṭiḥ al-ghayb*. Discussing the opening *ṣūra* and the appellation of God as *rabb al-'ālamīn*, Fakhr al-Dīn clarifies that these words do not only point towards the existence of God but also bear out God's being exalted (*kawnihi muta'āliyan*) above place and "time" (in the sense of duration), which he defines, respectively, as expressions for extended space and void, and for "the duration on account of which there occurs beforeness and afterness". He then writes:

Maḥāṭiḥ al-ghayb I, 187: The appellation "*rabb al-'ālamīn*" points towards His being the Lord (*rabbān*) over place and time, and their Creator (*khāliqan*), and their Originator (*mūjidan*). Moreover, it is known that the existence of the creator is inevitably prior (*sābiqan*) to the existence of the created.

3 Conclusion

The *Maḥāṭiḥ al-ghayb* may represent a turning point between Fakhr al-Dīn's early aporetic views and his late decision to adopt the Platonic account. Earlier he found himself genuinely conflicted, given that all plausible accounts of time's essence face insurmountable objections. At that stage, he was therefore reluctant to endorse any particular positive view:

Mabāḥith II.1.5.63, I.761f.: Know that I have not yet arrived at the realization of the truth about time, so let your expectation from this book be a thorough examination and report of whatever can possibly be said [about time] from all points of view.

In his *Mulakhkhaṣ*, the impasse led to a cautious subjectivism, according to which beforeness and afterness are mere "items of consideration" (*umūr i'tibāriyya*) through which we understand the concurrence of motions and events. The mature Fakhr al-Dīn, by contrast, is convinced that time or duration is contingent in itself. This is clear from his commentary on the Qur'ān and its affirmation of the createdness of time. But the view is developed at full length only in the *Maṭālīb*: duration is, as "Plato" said, self-subsistent and existent prior to things that change in time. This enables duration to serve as the framework against which changes in the rest of the created world are measured; such changes borrow their beforeness and afterness, mediated through the now, from duration. Yet duration in itself does not change. Its relations to changing things are mere extrinsic accidents, so Aristotle and Avicenna were

wrong to suppose that all time is dependent on motion (of the celestial sphere or in general). While duration is thereby revealed to be a self-subsisting thing, it is contingent in itself and necessary through another. It is, in short, the work of God.

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The Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*)

From Avicenna to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

Fedor Benevich

One of the most famous and influential ideas of Avicennan metaphysics is that God is the Necessary Existent through Himself (*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihī*). This notion plays a central role in Avicenna's proof for God's existence: roughly speaking, everything in the world exists contingently through itself (*mumkin al-wujūd bi-dhātihī*), and in order to exist needs something which is necessarily existent through itself, namely God.¹

To be a Necessary Existent is not just an attribute of God among others. God Himself or God's essence (*dhāt*) just is the Necessary Existent. Avicenna argues in *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.4 that one can distinguish in God no quiddity (*māhiyya*) apart from being the Necessary Existent.² How precisely should one understand this? Is God's essence necessity of existence, or is God's essence to be identified with existence, which in His case is necessary? Avicenna is rather ambiguous on this question. He speaks both of necessity of existence (*wujūb al-wujūd*) and of existence that is necessary, but his conclusion is that God's essence is "thatness" (*annīyya*) or alternatively "existence on the condition that non-existence and other attributes are negated" (*al-wujūd ma'a shart salb al-'adam wa-sā'ir al-awṣāf*).³ In his *Ta'liqāt*, Avicenna claims that God's essence is "being necessary" (*wājibiyya*), which he immediately glosses as existence in actuality (*wujūd bi-l-fi'l*).⁴ In the *Mubāḥathāt*, the same notion of *wājibiyya* is instead explained as something possessing necessary existence due to itself (*huwa lladhī yajibū wujūduhu*) however elsewhere *Mubāḥathāt* agrees with *Ta'liqāt* saying that *wājibiyya* means existence itself (*naḥs al-wujūd*).⁵

This paper will not offer a reconstruction of Avicenna's own doctrine (though such a project remains a desideratum in the secondary literature).⁶ Rather its

1 On Avicenna's proof for God's existence see Mayer, "Burhān al-Siddiqīn"; Marmura, "Proof"; Davidson, "Proofs."

2 Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.4, 275.15–16; *Najāt*, 556–58; and *Dānishnāma*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 76.10–77.12.

3 Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.4, 276.2 (cf. *Dānishnāma*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 76.12) and 276.16.

4 Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt* 265, 180.7–10.

5 Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt* §386–91, 140–42. We return to both passages in the concluding section.

6 On Avicenna's conception of God see e.g. Adamson, "From Necessary Existent to God" and Bertolacci, "Essence-Existence", 282–83, as well as the aforementioned references on Avicenna's proof for God's existence.

aim is to present interpretations of, and reactions against, Avicenna's claim that God's essence consists in being the Necessary Existent. The main figure will be Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), who argued against Avicenna's conception of God in numerous works. His arguments will be analyzed against the background of several philosophers and theologians who stood between him and Avicenna, including Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), 'Umar Khayyām (d. 517/1123), Rukn al-Dīn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141), 'Umar b. Sahlān al-Sāwī (d. c. 540/1145), Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. 560/1164–65), Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī (d. c. 590/1194), and Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī (d. before 600/1204), some of whose ideas al-Rāzī used extensively, as we will see. As has already been noticed by Toby Mayer and Robert Wisnovsky, theological reasons may have led these and other authors to pose criticisms against the Avicennan notion of Necessary Existent.⁷ However, I will approach this topic as a purely metaphysical one, and focus on three aspects of the question: (1) If God is sheer existence, then how does He differ from existences which worldly things have? This problem was discussed on the basis of the analysis of how the word "existence" signifies: does it always have the same meaning or not? (2) If God's existence differs from worldly existences, how can one avoid making God composite? This issue was solved through the idea of non-entitativity of such notions as "necessity". (3) Last but not least, if God is composite, how we ought to construe this composition? Our main hero, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, will use the theory of the priority of essence to its existence to explain composition in God. I will thus show how certain basic metaphysical presuppositions—in some cases thoroughly Avicennan, in others Ash'arite—drove the debate over the Necessary Existent in al-Rāzī and his predecessors.

1 Univocity, Equivocity, and Analogy of Existence

For the most part, the post-Avicennan tradition clearly understood Avicenna as holding that God is pure existence which necessarily exists. Supporting this interpretation were of course the aforementioned statements by Avicenna himself; an important role may also have been played by al-Ghazālī's influential *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, which states on Avicenna's behalf that "there is no quiddity

7 Mayer, "Rāzī's Critique", 208 and Wisnovsky, "Essence-Existence Distinction", 44. Mayer's analysis of al-Rāzī was based entirely on *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*. Therefore I will discuss several other treatises by al-Rāzī but exclude *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*. Still, my observations are largely in harmony with those of Mayer.

for the First other than necessary existence (*al-wujūd al-wājib*).⁸ Even the title of the eighth discussion reads: “The existence of the First is simple, that is, He is pure existence (*wujūd maḥḍ*), and there is no quiddity and nor reality to which existence is added”.⁹ This is also how Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī understood Avicenna. His interpretation of Avicenna is introduced as one among three possibilities as to how essence and existence might relate to each other in God:

- (1) existence is equivocal (*bi-shtirāk al-ism*) and identical to God’s essence
- (2) existence is univocal (*bi-l-ishtirāk al-ma’nawī; maḥmūm wāḥid*) and additional (*muqārin; ṣifa ‘arīḍa; na’t*) to God’s essence
- (3) existence is univocal and identical to God’s essence¹⁰

The first position is ascribed by al-Rāzī to Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/936) and to Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044), and revolves around the claim that essence and existence are always identical. This leads directly to the equivocality of existence.¹¹ For, if the essences of “black” and “white” are respectively identical with their existences, then existence is said of “black” and of “white” only equivocally, since an existence that is identical to blackness cannot have the same meaning as an existence that is identical to whiteness. The same applies to God and e.g. Zayd: given that God’s essence is identical to His existence, and Zayd’s essence is identical to his existence, “existence” applies to Zayd and God equivocally—that is, with different meanings. In the first case, “existence” means “God’s existence”; in the second case, “existence” means “Zayd’s existence.” That this is indeed al-Rāzī’s understanding of position (1) becomes clear from his lengthy discussions of the essence-existence distinction and the univocity of existence in the *Mabāḥith*, *Nihāya*, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, *Arbaʿīn*, and *Maṭālib*. In none of these texts do we find any suggestion that existence could be both equivocal *and* distinct from essence. Rather, al-Rāzī always associates equivocality of existence with the identity of essence and existence.¹²

8 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 111.22. Nevertheless, at *Tahāfut*, 114.13 he still uses *wujūb al-wujūd*.

9 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 116.

10 One finds this distinction in most of al-Rāzī’s works that include a discussion of God’s essence, for instance *Mabāḥith*, 1:120.17–21 (there is a scribal or editor’s mistake here: one should add *ghayr* before *bi-shtirāk al-ism* in the second option, which al-Rāzī clearly explains later as univocity of existence), *Nihāya*, 1:437–38; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:143; *Maṭālib*, 1 291.

11 Cf. Eichner, “Essence and Existence”, 125–26.

12 Cf. al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1 106–20; *Nihāya*, 1:345–85; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fols 75r–76v; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:82–84; *Maṭālib*, 1:291–94.

Why would this be? Two possible explanations present themselves. Firstly, he may be led by Avicenna himself. In *Dānishnāma*, Avicenna likewise sees equivocality of existence as inextricably linked to the denial that essence and existence are distinct.¹³ Secondly, al-Rāzī may be influenced here by traditional Ash'arite metaphysics, to which al-Rāzī alluded above explicitly, mentioning al-Ash'arī by name. A group of classical Ash'arites denied the essence-existence distinction, claiming that all generic notions (which they knew under the name of *aḥwāl* or *aḥkām*) apply to different objects only in a nominal way. Existence is such a notion: it is a single name (*ism*) applied to different, metaphysically real objects, even though the referents of the name share nothing in reality. "Black" and its existence refer to one unique thing; "white" and its existence refer to another unique thing. The only feature that both things share is the utterance "existence" and it has different meanings in both cases.¹⁴ Al-Rāzī apparently assumed that metaphysical nominalism is tantamount to the assumption that the terms in question are applied equivocally (which literally means "one name, different meanings").¹⁵ He also mentioned above Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. Further research needs to be done on the metaphysics of this important Mu'tazilite theologian. However, if we may assume that al-Malāḥimī followed him faithfully,¹⁶ then the latter's claim in *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn* that essence and existence are not distinct, and his nominalism about generic notions (again, here called *aḥwāl*), speak in favor of al-Rāzī's ascription of connecting these views in his report of Abū l-Ḥusayn.¹⁷

Position (1) thus amounts to the claim that essence and existence are identical in all cases, including the case of God, which is assumed to imply the equivocality of existence.¹⁸ Al-Rāzī is generally consistent in rejecting position (1), speaking of it favorably only twice, in *al-Ishāra fī 'ilm al-kalām* and

13 Avicenna, *Dānishnāma*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 36.15ff: equivocality of existence would imply that the sentences *jawhar hast* and *jawhar jawhar ast* have the same meaning.

14 On the Ash'arite denial of essence-existence distinction see Wisnovsky, "Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context", 145–60 as well as "Essence-Existence Distinction" and Frank, "Ash'arite Ontology". On traditional Ash'arite nominalism see Benevich, "The Classical Ash'ari Theory of *Aḥwāl*", 158–67. Al-Rāzī connects the "equivocality of existence" theory with a denial of *aḥwāl* at al-Rāzī, *al-Ishāra fī 'ilm al-kalām*, 76.

15 This is the usual interpretation of the traditional Ash'arite nominalism about the status of *aḥwāl*, on this see my paper "The Metaphysics of Šahrastānī".

16 Cf. Madelung, "Ibn al-Malāḥimī's Refutation of the Philosophers", 331.

17 Al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfa*, 62.10ff.

18 This kind of global equivocality of existence should not be confused with a different doctrine proposed by al-Shahrastānī, according to which existence is univocal with one exception: existence is said equivocally only of God. We will discuss this version of the equivocality thesis below.

in *Muḥaṣṣal*.¹⁹ Everywhere else he adopts position (2), which he in *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl* ascribes to the Muʿtazilite Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī; elsewhere he only mentions “a significant group of *mutakallimīn*”.²⁰ Position (3), meanwhile, according to him is that of the “philosophers” (*falāsifa* in *Nihāya*, *ḥukamāʾ* in *Mabāḥith*). According to al-Rāzī, Avicenna, who is mentioned by name for this position in *Maṭālib* and *Arbaʿīn*, claims that existence is something univocal and that God is pure existence (*wujūd mujarrad*). The difference between God and the existence of other things is established through a negational attribute (*qayd salbī*), namely being devoid (*mujarrad*) of any quiddity.²¹

Al-Rāzī himself endorses position (2), and argues extensively to rebut positions (1) and (3). We will explore position (2) in greater detail in the final section of this paper. For now, let us concentrate on his refutations of (1) and (3). Of course, to defeat (1) he needs to insist that existence is indeed univocal, which means rejecting the traditional Ashʿarite position. He advances many arguments for univocity, among which three play a particularly central role. The first is an argument from opposition (*muqābala*): existence opposes non-existence (*ʿadam*); but non-existence is a single, univocal notion, therefore existence must likewise be too.²² The second is an argument from division (*taqsīm*): existence is divided in various ways, for instance into the contingent and the necessary. The divided meaning remains the same, with the added characteristics (contingent and necessary) providing the distinction.²³ The third is an epistemic argument from “belief” (*iʿtiqād*): one can believe that something

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- 19 Al-Rāzī, *al-Ishāra fī ʿilm al-kalām*, 75–76. Al-Rāzī’s position here is ambiguous and looks as a mixture of Avicennan and Ashʿarite doctrine: God’s essence is identical to existence which is called “existence” only equivocally. The immaturity of the discussion could be explained by early dating (see Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 7). However the equivocality of existence is also accepted in *Muḥaṣṣal*, 54–55 and identity of God’s essence and existence in *Muḥaṣṣal*, 152.22, though it does not look like al-Rāzī really changed his mind due to some new arguments. The support that he provides for equivocality is very brief and employs the arguments that al-Rāzī rejects elsewhere on some good basis (like *tasalsul*-argument). Avicennan arguments for identity of essence and existence in God are also rejected on the usual Rāzian basis of the priority of essence over existence (*Muḥaṣṣal*, 67).
- 20 Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, 1:438.4–5; cf. *Maṭālib*, 1:291.9 and *Arbaʿīn*, 1:143.15. This account is most probably based on the idea that Abū Hāshim was the inventor of the *aḥwāl* as well as the Ashʿarite common opinion that existence is a *ḥāl* among the Muʿtazilite proponents of *aḥwāl*, i.e. is something additional (*zāʿid*) to the self/essence (*dhāt*) of the thing (see al-Juwaynī, *Shāmil*, 129 and al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāya*, 140).
- 21 Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, 1:438.6–9; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:143.6–11; *Maṭālib*, 1:291.1–4.
- 22 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:107.1–10; *Nihāya*, 1:346.7–9; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 76r.3–5; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:82.10–12; *al-Risāla al-Kamāliyya*, 45.13–16; *Maṭālib*, 1:291.16–18.
- 23 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:83.5–8; *Nihāya*, 1:346.10–11; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:83.5–8; *al-Risāla al-kamāliyya*, 45.17–21; *Maṭālib*, 1:291.19–20.

exists while disregarding its ontological status, for instance whether it is accident or substance. Things thus share the notion (*mafhūm*) of existence, even though they do not share such features as accidentality and substantiality (this argument is used also to support the non-identity of essence and existence).²⁴

None of these three arguments is entirely original. The first can be already found in Avicenna's *Dānishnāma*: if existence were not univocal, non-existence would not be univocal either (*nīst rā nīz yik ma'nā nabūdī*).²⁵ As for the second, one finds the same line of reasoning expressed in al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, and it is posed also by al-Malāḥimī's hypothetical dialectical opponent in *Tuhfa*.²⁶ Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī too argues that division of existence into kinds, such as accident or concomitant, implies a univocal meaning of existence.²⁷ The third argument, finally, has its roots in the works of Ash'arites who rejected the nominalist view on such generic notions as "being an accident" or "being a substance". A century before al-Rāzī, 'Abd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) already argued for the metaphysical reality of such notions on the basis that we can conceive of existence as one and the same notion in different objects disregarding the differences in their specific attributes.²⁸ Al-Rāzī reproduces not only the idea that there is an opposition between existence and specificity (*khuṣūṣiyya*), but also al-Juwaynī's claim that this conceptual distinction is a case of self-evident, necessary knowledge.²⁹

Having established the position that existence is univocal, al-Rāzī moves to refute the presupposition that led the proponents of position (1) to claim that existence is equivocal. This, as we have seen, is the presupposition that existence is always identical to essence. Al-Rāzī argues that, to the contrary, existence is additional or extrinsic (*zā'id; khārij*) to essence.³⁰ Here he is arguing for an Avicennan position, so his central arguments are unsurprisingly also Avicennan. For example he makes the point that one can conceive of an essence while doubting whether it exists, which goes back to Avicenna's

24 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:107.1–10; *Nihāya*, 1:346.4–6, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fols 75v.19–76r.3; *Arba'īn*, 1:82.10–12; *Maṭālib*, 1:291.21–28.

25 Avicenna, *Dānishnāma*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 37.8.

26 Al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 84.6–10 and al-Malāḥimī, *Tuhfa*, 63.15–16. The latter is most probably derived from the former. Al-Rāzī's dialectical objection to this argument is very similar to one used by al-Malāḥimī (*Mabāḥith*, 1:109.3–10).

27 Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth*, 77.22–23.

28 Benevich, "The Classical Ash'ari Theory of *Aḥwāl*", 145–58.

29 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:107.3; 1:211–13; and *Arba'īn*, 1:82.7 for *khuṣūṣiyya*; and *Maṭālib*, 1:292 (arg. 6), which frames al-Juwaynī's proof as a transcendental argument.

30 For a detailed study of the most of the following arguments and positions see my recent "Essence-Existence Distinction".

Ishārāt or *Maqūlāt*;³¹ and also that if existence were identical to essence, then saying “substance exists” would amount to “substance is substance”, found in *Dānishnāma* and consequently in al-Ghazālī’s *Maqāṣid*.³² Even the traditional Aristotelian argument used to show that existence is not a genus, namely that if it were, differentiae would not be existent, is found in al-Rāzī.³³ He does however make a significant original contribution to the debate. This is his defense of the essence-existence distinction against a famous counter-argument: if existence is additional to essence, then existence itself must exist through a further existence, and this leads to an infinite regress (*tasalsul*). This argument is already found in Bahmanyār’s *Tahṣīl*, repeated in ‘Umar Khayyām’s *Risālat al-dīyā’ al-‘aqlī*, and famously appears in al-Suhrawardī’s *Hikmat al-ishrāq* and *Talwīḥāt*.³⁴ Al-Rāzī responds by using the terminology of *ḥāll* and *maḥall*, “inherent” and “subject of inherence”. The supposed second-order existence cannot be an inherent (*ḥāll*) of first-order existence, since the latter has no more claim to be a subject of inherence (*maḥall*) than the former does. After all, they are both simply existences, and thus essentially identical. Nor can both of them be features in some third underlying subject of inherence, because two essentially identical features of one and the same subject of inherence are just one (a version of the identity of indiscernibles principle).³⁵ Therefore existence can never belong to existence; rather existence pertains only to quiddities.³⁶ Existence means the presence (*ḥuṣūl*), realization (*taḥaqquq*; *taqarrur*), or reality (*thubūt*) of quiddities.³⁷ This enables al-Rāzī to respond to a critic who insists that we could apply the same conceivability test to existence that we do to essence (that is, just as we could know what a triangle is

31 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:115.3–4; *Nihāya*, 1:345.13–14; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 76r.8–10; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:85.21–23. Al-Rāzī saves this argument from the possible objection that one cannot conceive of essences apart from their mental existence (*wujūd dhihnī*), drawing a fine distinction between the mental existence and the knowledge of the mental existence (*Mabāḥith*, 1:115.4–14).

32 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:112.13–16; *Nihāya*, 1:343.4–6; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 76r.19–21; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:87; 8–15; cf. Avicenna, *Dānishnāma*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 37.3–7; cf. Eichner, “Existence and Non-Existence”, 161.

33 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:118.7–9; *Nihāya*, 1:348.4–5; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 76v.1–3; *Maʿālib*, 1:291.16–18; cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 998b23; 1059b31; and Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Maqūlāt* 2.1, 62.5–11.

34 Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 280.17–281.5; Khayyām, *Risālat al-dīyāʾ al-‘aqlī*, 58.12–15 (goes back apparently to Bahmanyār’s discussion), al-Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, 64.13–65.9; and *Talwīḥāt*, 22.10–13. Bahmanyār’s notion of *mawjūdiyya* is used in al-Rāzī’s, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 62.17.

35 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:115.17–116.19.

36 Cf. *Nihāya*, 1:378.6; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 76r.12–13. Also al-Rāzī’s discussion in *Mabāḥith*, 1:133–34 goes in the same direction; cf. Eichner, “Existence and Non-Existence”, 151–52.

37 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:133.11 and *Arbaʿīn*, 1:89.8–9. Primarily in concrete, i.e. *taḥaṣṣul fī l-ʾayān* (cf. *Mabāḥith*, 1:113.7–8).

while being in doubt whether a triangle exists, so we can conceive of existence while being in doubt whether existence exists; this argument was the favorite objection to the essence-existence distinction in al-Suhrawardī). No, al-Rāzī says: the test is inapplicable to existence, and meaningful existential doubt is always about quiddities.³⁸

This leads us to al-Rāzī's argument against position (3), which for him is Avicenna's own theory. Against this position, he ironically uses the very same Avicennan premises that have arisen in his refutation of position (1): the univocity of existence and the fact that existence is extrinsic to essence. Effectively, his strategy is to apply this analysis of creaturely existence to God's existence, in order to undermine Avicenna's doctrine that God is sheer existence, devoid of any quiddity. His main argument runs as follows. As already established, existence is univocally predicated in every instance. In that case, the meaning of existence either always imply that it is devoid of quiddity—which is absurd because we have shown that it is attached to worldly essences—or it always implies that it is attached to a quiddity—in which case, the same must apply to God, so Avicenna's position is wrong. The only escape would be for Avicenna to say that in itself, existence is indifferent: it may either lack quiddity or be attached to quiddity. But in that case, there would need to be some extrinsic ground (*sabab munfaṣil min khārij*) which would be responsible for determining which of these occurs. That is, there would need to be not only a cause for the attachment of existence to essences in the case of creatures (which is of course something Avicenna himself asserts), but also a cause for existence's being devoid of quiddity in God's case. This is something Avicenna cannot admit, since it would mean there is a cause for God's being.³⁹

Al-Rāzī deploys this argument numerous times, with variations in detail (especially in *Maṭālib*) but the same basic thrust. Effectively, he is saying that once we accept the univocity of existence between God and worldly essences, we must seek an explanation for why God's existence is different from the existence of all other things. Henceforth I will call this the "univocity problem". The argument may go back to a similar line of thought in al-Mas'ūdī. In his *Shukūk*, he argues that existence is an accident for the worldly things, yet according to Avicenna it should be self-subsistent (*qā'im bi-l-dhāt*) in God's case. How can one

38 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:115.13–15; *Nihāya*, 1:359.1–2; 378.5–10; and *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 76r.13–14 (here and in *Mabāḥith*, 1 117.1–5 another simpler argument is provided: existence does not apply to existence because non-existence does not). Cf. al-Suhrawardī, *Talwihāt*, 22.10–13 (§13).

39 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1 121.6–122.1; *Nihāya*, 1:438.14–439.8, *Jawābāt*, 54.18–55.4; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fols 76v.10–77r.9; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:144.2–145.5; *al-Risāla al-kamālīyya*, 46.15–24; *Maṭālib*, 1:295.9–297.13.

and the same notion of existence be substance in one case and accident in another? Al-Mas'ūdī dismisses this as absurd, and can do so on good Avicennan grounds, since Avicenna himself denied that a thing can sometimes be an accident and sometimes a substance.⁴⁰ Likewise al-Rāzī reminds Avicenna in the *Mabāḥith* that he himself argued against the substantiality of “one” on the grounds that “one” is at least in some cases an accident. Why then not apply the same line of reasoning to “existence”?⁴¹ On the other hand, al-Mas'ūdī's argument is not exactly the same as al-Rāzī's. Al-Mas'ūdī is unwilling to grant that God's existence could be distinguished from worldly essences merely by the attribute of having no cause, because such an attribute would be purely negational (*salbī*).⁴² Al-Rāzī is happy to grant this, but asks for the ground (*sabab*) of this additional attribute—something that Avicenna cannot provide without admitting that God is caused. Another difference between al-Mas'ūdī and al-Rāzī is that, while both reject the equivocality of existence, they do so on different grounds. Whereas al-Rāzī dismisses equivocality in general, al-Mas'ūdī rejects it only in respect to God: if existence in the ordinary sense as “concrete being” (*kawn fī l-a'yān*) does not apply to God, then God does not exist in the ordinary sense.⁴³

The same idea that existence is usually accidental, but in the one case of God self-subsistent, is picked up by al-Suhrawardī. At one point in *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, he is trying to rebut an objection to his postulation of Platonic Forms. The objection goes like this: supposedly, a Platonic Form is a feature existing in no subject of inherence (*maḥall*). But these same features do exist in a subject of inherence when they are materially instantiated. This is impossible, because the same feature cannot sometimes exist in a subject of inherence and sometimes not. To this, al-Suhrawardī responds with the same point noticed by al-Rāzī and al-Mas'ūdī: for Avicenna, this is precisely what happens in the case of existence. It has no subject of inherence in God's case but does have such a subject in every other case.⁴⁴ If that can happen with existence, then why not with Platonic Forms? Notice that al-Suhrawardī is effectively suggesting that

40 Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, 256.14–258.2; cf. Avicenna, *Shifā'*, *Maqūlāt* 1.6 (on this, see Benevich, “Fire and Heat”). Al-Rāzī is closest to the formulation in al-Mas'ūdī at *Maṭālib*, 1:295.17–296.7. Of course Avicenna would deny that God is a substance (*Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.4, 277.15–278.3), but he must agree that existence in God's case is self-subsistent, in contrast to the existence found in worldly essences. Hence, al-Mas'ūdī's and al-Rāzī's argument does not miss the target so much.

41 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1 125.10–20; cf. Avicenna, *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.3, 82ff.

42 Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, 257.5–8.

43 Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, 257.13–16. See below for Abū l-Barakāt's contrary conclusion that only God would exist in this case.

44 Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 92–94.

Avicenna's God is a Platonic Form of existence. This may be a genuine insight and not just a point scored in dialectical debate: Stephen Menn has pointed out that in *Ilāhiyyāt* 5.1 Platonic Forms are characterized as “negatively conditioned” (*bi-shart lā*), just like God's existence in *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.4.⁴⁵

Al-Rāzī invokes the univocity problem in other ways too. For example, he reminds us that for Avicenna existence is primary and self-evident, a kind of transcendental notion, as one could say in post-Kantian tradition.⁴⁶ So if God were just existence and nothing else, as position (3) would have it, then one should know the existence of God in a primary way. Al-Rāzī sees that consequence as absurd, given that one must argue at length to prove that God exists.⁴⁷ By contrast, his predecessor Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, among the few thinkers of this period to accept the Avicennan definition of God, does not seem to be disturbed by this problem. In the *faṣl al-ḥaqq* of his *Mu'tabar*, he introduces the idea of the Necessary Existent, which is pure existence, as if it were a primary self-evident notion. First, he agrees with Avicenna that existence in general is a primary notion (*awwalī*).⁴⁸ Further, he rules out the infinite regress argument we saw above: existence need have no second-order existence, but rather it is a kind of existent (*mawjūd*) which exists through itself (*mawjūd li-dhātihī*). In the middle of his discussion, however, we realize that Abū l-Barakāt is talking about God and not just existence in the common sense of the word. For he calls this existence “simple first existence” (*al-wujūd al-basīṭ al-awwal*), and then says: “this existent is existence itself (*‘ayn al-wujūd*) and its reality (*ḥaqīqatuhu*), and it is an existent which is a Necessary Existent in itself”.⁴⁹ There is something surprising to this line of thought: it starts as if it were talking about the status of the existence of ordinary objects, such as the existence of Zayd or the existence of blackness. We expect Abū l-Barakāt

45 Menn, “Avicenna's Metaphysics”, 158.

46 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:97–106 and *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 75r.6–19 goes back to Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt* 1.5, 10.11ff.

47 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:124.12–17; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 77r.9–10; *Arba'īn*, 1:145.20–146.8; *al-Risāla al-kamālīyya*, 45.26–46.2; *Maṭālib*, 1.301.9–302.5.

48 For this claim he invokes the primacy of self-awareness, which is awareness of one's own existence. On self-awareness in Avicenna see Kaukua, “Self-Awareness”; Black, “Avicenna on Self-Awareness”.

49 Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, 3:62.22–64.19. Abū l-Barakāt compares existence that exists through itself to whiteness which is white through itself. Umār Khayyām and Ibn Ghaylān, however, insist that one cannot predicate “white” of “whiteness” at all. See Benevich “Essence-Existence-Distinction”, 220–21. Abū l-Barakāt's claim that existent relates to existent as *taṣawwur dhihnī* may seem to recall of Khayyām's and Ibn Ghaylān's position that existence is *i'tibārī* (see below). However, the claim here is entirely different: Abū l-Barakāt never says that existence is *i'tibārī* for an essence.

to argue that the existence of Zayd does not require any further existence in order to avoid the infinite regress of existences, and this is what he seems to do. Yet suddenly then—through the shared notion of the “existent through itself”—the discussed existence appears to be the existence of God which is identical to His essence. Abū l-Barakāt’s thought may be interpreted as a semi-transcendental argument for the existence of God: we necessarily know that there is existence that belongs to existents; in order to avoid the infinite regress of existences that themselves exist, we assume that there is existence which exists through itself; this existence is God.⁵⁰ However, if God just is the existence which one more or less necessarily knows, how is He different from the existence of common things?

Both Abū l-Barakāt and Avicenna, whose position Abū l-Barakāt claims here to defend, know that a notion of God as pure existence may lead to the univocity problem. Abū l-Barakāt thus raises a dialectical objection against himself: if God is existence, then His attributes like “everlasting” (*dāʾim*) would have to apply to every object in the world, since existence does; the only way to avoid this is to accept that existence applies only to God, and not to worldly essences.⁵¹ Avicenna has similar troubles in *Mubāḥathāt*: God cannot be existence with an essential attribute of necessary existence, because in that case every existence—being essentially identical with God’s existence—would likewise be necessary.⁵² Abū l-Barakāt’s solution is to appeal to the Avicennan notion of *tashkīk*, which Avicenna interestingly does not use in his case (I will address Avicenna’s solution in the conclusion). He agrees that properly speaking (*ʿalā l-ḥaqīqa*) only God’s existence is existence, like motion applies to the sailor as opposed to the ship and the passenger. Hence God’s attributes apply to existence in the proper sense, yet do not apply to the derived existence which attaches to worldly essences.⁵³ Al-Suhrawardī alludes to this same escape route in his *Tabwīḥāt*. His understanding of *tashkīk* is based on the idea that necessity is the perfection (*kamāl*) of existence, which pertains to God’s existence but is lacking in worldly existences, so that the difference in attributes arises from the presence or absence of this perfection.⁵⁴ If one reads

50 An even more “transcendental” argument can be found in al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāraʿa*, 60.7–10. There he claims that one cannot doubt the existence of God, because God is the paradigm *ḥakīm* and doubting God’s existence is already a *ḥukm*.

51 Abū l-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, 3:64.20–65.2.

52 Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt* §386, 140.

53 Abū l-Barakāt, *al-Muʿtabar*, 3:65.2–66.12.

54 Al-Suhrawardī, *Tabwīḥāt*, 36.13–15 and *Mashāriʿ*, 397.5–6. It was most probably due to al-Suhrawardī that the theory of analogical existence became so influential in the later

al-Suhrawardī's "perfection" as similar to Abū l-Barakāt's "properly speaking", their solutions amount to the same.

Here we have the famous thesis of *tashkīk al-wujūd*: existence is predicated of God and other things neither univocally nor equivocally but analogically, or (to adopt Treiger's translation) in a modulated way.⁵⁵ This is indeed a way to solve the dilemma of the univocity problem: although existence is rather a univocal notion, it applies to different objects in different degrees. Therefore there is no problem in stating that God is sheer existence: the attributes of such existence will only apply to it, since it belongs to other objects in a derivate and weaker sense. The idea was already developed elsewhere in Avicenna's *Mubāḥathāt*⁵⁶ and widely used in the later post-Avicennan tradition (most probably because of the Suhrawardian influence).⁵⁷ In the early period, it was known for instance to al-Malāḥimī. He rejects it, on the grounds that the modulated existences would still have one and the same foundation (*aṣl*), about which we could pose the same problems as would arise for univocal existence.⁵⁸ Al-Malāḥimī thus alludes to the intuitive resistance against the very idea of semi-univocal notions: after all, does the existence of God share any meaning with the existence of common things? If it does, then the univocity problem raises again; if it does not, then God does not exist in the common sense of the word.

The same resistance to make sense of the *tashkīk* theory may have stood behind the fact that neither al-Ghazālī, nor al-Mas'ūdī, nor al-Rāzī discuss the notion in their criticisms of Avicenna's conception of God. They instead assume that Avicenna is forced to choose one of two possibilities: existence is either univocal or equivocal. And of course, he will face insurmountable objections either way. In the exceptional case of his *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, al-Rāzī does mention the notion of *tashkīk*. Nevertheless, here he opts again for the univocity of existence with his usual arguments. Still, in the end he admits that existence is "more appropriate" (*awlā*) for the Necessary in Itself than for contingent things, and also more appropriate for substances than for accidents. His explanation of *tashkīk* is very brief: it is priority in respect of "the extent of

tradition. For al-Abharī, who followed al-Suhrawardī, may have stood at the roots of its popularity (cf. e.g. *Bayān al-asrār*, fols 41v.10–42r.1).

55 On Avicenna's concept of *tashkīk* see Treiger, "Transcendental Modulation" and Acar, "Talking about God". On al-Ṭūsī's use of *tashkīk* see Mayer, "al-Rāzī's Critique", 212–17.

56 Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt* §692, 232.

57 It was accepted by both Ṭūsians (e.g. al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 2:572.1–575.11) and Ishrāqīs (e.g. al-Shahrazūrī, *Shajara*, 254.10–255.6).

58 Al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfa*, 64.23–66.6, maybe from al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 111.13–17.

concomitants and effects" (*kathrat al-lawāzim wa-l-āthār*).⁵⁹ Given that al-Rāzī does not reject this position, he may even see univocity and *tashkik* as perfectly compatible; accordingly he does not see *tashkik* as a possible response to the univocity problem. For him the "appropriateness" of existence apparently applies not to existence itself, but to the essence to which existence pertains. Applying it to existence itself would mean rejecting univocity, since two instances of a univocal notion cannot have different necessary concomitants. On the contrary, distinct essences can have the same necessary concomitant (for instance, different odd numbers have the same necessary concomitant of being odd).⁶⁰ Given that al-Rāzī himself wants to defend the position that God's essence is distinct from his existence, this description of the *tashkik* perfectly fits his purposes: it is God's distinct essence which makes the existence belong to Him more appropriately than to anything else. In this theory, existence remains a univocal notion which belongs to different essences in a different way. Notice that the future Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's response based on *tashkik* actually comes very close to this: the univocal existence is an identical concomitant of modally different kinds of existence (that is, the modally different existence stands in the place of al-Rāzī's essence in al-Ṭūsī's picture), which makes it not so diametrically opposed to al-Rāzī's view, as I will also mention in the conclusion.

2 Necessity and Existence as Non-Entitative

The univocity problem did not escape the attention of al-Shahrastānī, but he approached it from a different angle. As noted by Alexander Treiger and Wilfred Madelung, he claims in *Muṣāraʿa* that Avicenna is committed to the view that existence is something general (*shāmīl; ʿamm*), whereas its being necessary or contingent is something specific (*khāṣṣ*). He adds that existence is a genus (*jins*). Necessary and contingent existences would be its species, while necessity and contingency play the role of differentiae. Al-Shahrastānī argues

59 Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, 1:53–55. Eichner, "Existence and Non-Existence", 151 (n. 11) suggests that al-Rāzī rejects *tashkik* in *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fols 79v.19–80r.4 although the notion of *tashkik* is not mentioned explicitly. Al-Rāzī argues there against *ishtidād wa-l-tanaqquṣ* in existence, which may be interpreted as the theory of *tashkik* (cf. al-Abharī, *Tanzīl al-afkār*, fol. 25r.12–15) as well as not (cf. al-Ḥillī, *Kashf*, 12.1–10, who apparently sees an acceptance of al-Rāzī's rejection of *ishtidād wa-l-tanaqquṣ* as compatible with the acceptance of *tashkik* in *Kashf*, 24–25).

60 As argued in Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, 269.12–13 and accepted in al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, 1:245.5–6.

that God's existence must be somehow different from that of worldly things.⁶¹ Hence, there is something common and also something specific in God: existence, and whatever differentiates His existence. This means that there is composition in God. Now, al-Shahrastānī can refute Avicenna using one of Avicenna's own doctrines against him: everything composed (*murakkab*) has an extrinsic cause, but this is absurd for God.⁶²

I shall call this the "composition problem". The core of the argument is that the presence of both "existence" and "necessity" in Avicenna's God implies multiplicity and composition, which would call for a further cause; yet God is uncaused. There are several possible ways to reply. The first is the simplest: simply to deny that there is any univocal genus of existence. Al-Shahrastānī is among the early post-Avicennan scholars who know the notion of *tashkīk al-wujūd*, but he claims that it will not help. Even if existence is said about God and world unequally (*lam yakun bi-l-sawīyya*), there remain something common and something specific.⁶³ Al-Malāḥimī adopted a similar view, as we saw above with his notion of "foundation" (*aṣl*), and he too mentions the composition problem as a difficulty with Avicenna's theory.⁶⁴

All other solutions to the problem appeal in one way or another to the claim that "necessity" and "existence" are not *entitative*.⁶⁵ By this I mean that they are notions which have no distinct entity in extramental reality to which they correspond. Here "distinct" need not mean "self-subsisting," as in the notion of substance. Rather, two entities are distinct just in case one may present their combination as a mereological sum. There are two sub-views here, which respectively make necessity and existence "conceptual" (*i'tibārī*) and "negational" (*adamī; salbī*). The former means that something is just a concept with no distinct entitative metaphysical correspondent. The latter means that we are ascribing some feature to an extramental entity which adds nothing to that entity.

The first kind of non-entitativity goes back to pre-Avicennan Ash'arite metaphysics. As noted above, some Ash'arites denied any metaphysical reality

61 Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāra'a*, 34.8–11.

62 Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāra'a*, 30.4–31.2; on this see Treiger, "Transcendental Modulation", 329–30; Madelung, "Šahrastānī's Streitschrift"; and Jolivet, "Critique". The same criticism appears in al-Shahrastānī's different version of his *Muṣāra'a* argument, which he sent to al-Sāwī (al-Sāwī, *Muṣāra'at al-Muṣāra'a*, fols 100r.1–100v.5; although the title is obviously not original but rather invented by scribes I keep it for the sake of shortness).

63 Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāra'a*, 31.3–34.2 and 37.11–12.

64 Al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfa*, 65.11–17. The composition problem can be already found in al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 111.10–12.

65 This notion corresponds to what Ishrāqīs used to call *bi-l-dhāt* (in a sense) as opposed to *bi-l-'araḍ* (cf. al-Shahrastānī, *Shajara*, 44.7–15).

to the generic notions called *aḥwāl*, a denial that was easily transformed into a rejection of real universals.⁶⁶ Hence, these Ash'arites (as they were read by later authors) claimed that multiple universals may refer to one and the same metaphysical object: "black" and "color" have different meanings, yet apply to one and the same object in extramental reality.⁶⁷ Ibn Ghaylān follows this line when, in his *Hudūth al-ʿālam*, he distinguishes between two ways an attribute may inhere in a subject: existential (*wujūdī*) and conceptual (*i'tibārī*). The first is, for example, the inherence of knowledge (*ʿilm*) in a knower; in this case, something real is added to something real. The second is, for instance, predicating color of whiteness. The predicate of color is purely mental (*dhihnī*) and does not add anything to white in reality.⁶⁸

One way to solve the composition problem, then, is to say that existence is not a distinct component in God because existence is not entitative, but *i'tibārī*. As I recently argued elsewhere, this latter claim seems to flourish with ʿUmar Khayyām. He composed two treatises almost wholly devoted to rejecting any real, extramental essence-existence distinction.⁶⁹ In his opinion, existence is simply an idea of being in extramental reality (*kawn fī l-aʿyān*). This idea is predicated of an essence in the mind when the mind relates (*nasaba*) the mental essence to a form that is indeed present (*al-ṣūra al-ḥāṣila*) in extramental reality.⁷⁰ In support of this view, Khayyām offers the familiar regress argument (real existence would have to exist through a second-order existence, and so on) but also another argument which is of an immediate relevance for the current discussion. If existence were added (*zāʿid*) to essence in reality, he says, then it would be added to the essence of God too, which would imply multiplicity and hence the composition problem. Note that Khayyām does not think that God's essence is existence in the ordinary sense of existence, neither does he ascribe this opinion to Avicenna. Otherwise he would not talk about the problem of adding existence to God's essence.⁷¹

66 Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 202ff. and al-Shahrastānī's discussion of *aḥwāl* in *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 134.17–149.4.

67 Benevich, "The Classical Ash'ari Theory of *Aḥwāl*", 161–63.

68 Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth*, 76.4–10.

69 Khayyām, *Riṣāla fī l-wujūd* and *Risālat al-ḍiyāʾ*; see Benevich, "Essence-Existence Distinction", 218–21. The importance of Khayyām for the existence debate was already noticed by Wisnovsky, "Essence-Existence Distinction", 37–38.

70 Khayyām, *Risālat al-ḍiyāʾ*, 59.6–10.

71 Khayyām, *Risālat al-ḍiyāʾ*, 62.3–5. Al-Rāzī seems to show knowledge of this argument at *Mabāḥith*, 1 113.1–3. Khayyām thinks that God's essence is *wājibīyya*, for which existence in the ordinary sense is an *i'tibārī*-additional notion. The first part of this position goes back to Avicenna's statement in *Taʿlīqāt* and *Mubāḥathāt*.

The idea that *wujūd* is something *i'tibārī* was picked up by Ibn Ghaylān. He uses it in two ways. First, to solve the composition problem: since existence is purely conceptual, it is just another notion which refers to the same object (*dhāt*) as God's *dhāt*, that is, to God Himself.⁷² One finds an anticipation of this in al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*. He claims there that the multiplicity philosophers are so keen to exclude from God would only arise through linguistic expression (*ilā mujarrad al-lafẓ*). This nominalist proposal assumes that existence is ontologically one with the essence to which it belongs.⁷³ In a second use of the idea, Ibn Ghaylān argues that, since existence is purely conceptual, one cannot claim that God's essence is existence. For in that case God would be purely conceptual too (*lam yakun fī l-wujūd khārij al-dhihn ṣānī*).⁷⁴ By interpreting the notion of existence as conceptual, Ibn Ghaylān suggests that Avicenna's philosophical theology is vulnerable to an objection often posed against "ontological arguments" for God: it deploys notions that have no metaphysical correspondence.⁷⁵ Again, al-Ghazālī had already hinted in this direction, stating that if the philosophers deny quiddity to God, they will be left with pure negation (*al-naḥy al-mujarrad*) and the word "existence" (*lafẓ al-wujūd*), which signifies nothing real unless it is associated to a particular quiddity.⁷⁶

Another figure to take up Khayyām's idea was al-Suhrawardī. He famously claims that existence is something *i'tibārī* only as well.⁷⁷ But actually, he usually is less radical than Ibn Ghaylān when it comes to applying the point to God. In *Mashārī'*, al-Suhrawardī grants to the Avicennans that God may be an exceptional case, where existence is not *i'tibārī* after all.⁷⁸ And for him, this leads to no composition problem. Even though existence is entitative, the necessity to which it is joined is an *i'tibārī* attribute.⁷⁹ It is only in *Muqāwamāt* that al-Suhrawardī appears to develop an argument which is similar to the

72 Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth*, 76.21–77.1.

73 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 117.12–18.

74 Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth*, 76.10–15.

75 On the question whether Avicenna's proof of God is ontological, see Mayer, "Burhān al-ṣiddiqīn".

76 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 1:118.11–14. Al-Ghazālī's argumentation is mostly based on the denial of conceivability of existence apart from any essence. The same move will be repeated by al-Rāzī in e.g. *Maṭālib*, 1:300.5–8.

77 Al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 64.10–67.12 (note that many of al-Suhrawardī's arguments are strongly reminiscent of Khayyām).

78 Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārī'*, 392.15. Previously he argues that even if we accept that existence is *i'tibārī*, we must still say that God's essence is existence.

79 For the composition problem see al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārī'*, 394.1–2 and 396.11–12 and a possible answer at 395.4–8. Note that at 396.14ff. al-Suhrawardī rejects the second approach to non-entitativity discussed below, namely that necessity is purely negational.

second horn of Ibn Ghaylān's refutation of Avicenna's doctrine: God cannot be existence, since existence has to be something merely conceptual, because otherwise an infinite regress would follow. On this basis al-Suhrawardī replaces the notion of existence with the notion of "life" (which has close connection to his notion of "light"), given that for him Avicenna's theory amounts to stating that God is something which exists to itself (*mawjūd 'inda nafsīhi*), which holds of "the living" properly speaking only.⁸⁰

Going back to al-Shahrestānī's composition problem, one should note that he would not be impressed by Ibn Ghaylān's solution to the composition problem. He suggests in *Muṣāra'a* that Avicenna could make a similar move: there is no composition in God of "existence" and "necessity", because both are mere concepts that refer to one and the same object.⁸¹ Al-Shahrestānī's response to this sheds light on his metaphysical commitments. Though he accepts Avicenna's theory that universals exist only in the mind, as we can see from his discussion of *aḥwāl* theory in *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, he also accepts there Avicenna's notion of "essences *qua* essences". These are ontological principles for both universals and particulars, and according to Avicenna exist in extramental reality.⁸² Now in *Muṣāra'a*, al-Shahrestānī uses precisely these Avicennan claims to reject the *i'tibārī* solution to the problem of composition. Universals may exist only in the mind, but they still enjoy a correspondence (*muṭābaqa*) with distinct entities in extramental reality.⁸³ So even if existence and necessity are mere *i'tibārāt* in the mind, they must still have something in extramental reality to which they correspond; and these correspondents must be ontologically distinct, so that God will be multiple after all. In the letter that al-Shahrestānī sent to al-Sāwī he paraphrases this argument. Although two intensions (*mafḥūm*) may refer (*dalla*) to one and the same subject, the referents still can be counted (*ta'addada*) as distinct entities so long as these entities do not co-imply each other.⁸⁴ To avoid this, he suggests that Avicenna should insist on a position that comes very close to the traditional Ash'arite view: all universals are *i'tibārāt* which do not involve entitative multiplicity in the subjects of which they are predicated. For the sake of argument, al-Shahrestānī concedes this, but then he wonders how then God's case is different from predicating "accident" of "color". For Avicenna would not accept the analogy between these cases, since he denies any distinction between genus and differentia in

80 Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 187.9–15.

81 Al-Shahrestānī, *Muṣāra'a*, 34.7–8.

82 Al-Shahrestānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 137.14–139.4, see Benevich, "Die Göttliche Existenz".

83 Al-Shahrestānī, *Muṣāra'a*, 35.11–36.4 and 37.1–8.

84 Al-Sāwī, *Muṣāra'at al-Muṣāra'a*, fol. 100r.1–100v.5.

God.⁸⁵ If God's case is however similar to that of "accident" for "color", where these are assumed to differ only conceptually and not in reality, then one can predicate everything one wants of God without running afoul of the composition problem. This is the solution adopted by the proponents of classical Ash'arite metaphysics, al-Ghazālī and Ibn Ghaylān. Yet al-Shahrastānī rejects this response. Apart from his general worry as to whether all universals in the mind have distinct correspondents in extramental reality, he clearly states that existence is something *wujūdī*, by which he means that predicating "existence" implies the presence of a real, distinct attribute.⁸⁶

Let us now turn to the other solution in terms of non-entitativity. This solution involves claiming some special status for "necessity", and any other attributes that might apply to God's essence, leaving only pure existence as a positive characterization of that essence. The special status is called "negational" (*salbī* or *'adamī*) or "relational" (*iḍāfī*). This solution too is known to al-Shahrastānī. Necessity, he suggests, means simply that God needs nothing else (*maslūb 'anhu l-hāja ilā l-ghayr*). But it is not the only attribute we ascribe to God; other ways of describing Him still threaten to bring in multiplicity. For instance, God's being a principle (*mabda'*) is not equivalent to existence in Him. Therefore "existence" and "being a principle" are two entities in God.⁸⁷ To this, he imagines Avicenna again using the idea of relational attribution: being a principle is simply a relation to created things, and adds nothing entitative to God's essence. Avicenna would conclude that "multiplicity in relations and negations does not entail multiplicity in His essence".⁸⁸

The idea that God's attributes are all relational and negational, so that their presence in God entails no multiplicity, was indeed already developed by Avicenna. It was well-known to the post-Avicennan tradition: one finds it in, among other texts, Bahmanyār's *Tahṣīl* and al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* and *Maqāṣid*.⁸⁹ Now al-Shahrastānī suggests that Avicenna might apply the same approach to the notion of necessity, interpreting it to mean simply lacking a cause. But of

85 Al-Sāwī, *Muṣāra'at al-Muṣāra'a*, fol. 100v.5–9; al-Shahrastānī's answer at 101r.6–102r.6.

86 Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāra'a*, 34.12.

87 Al-Sāwī, *Muṣāra'at al-Muṣāra'a*, fol. 100r.5–7. Al-Shahrastānī actually talks about the co-implication of "mind" (*'aql*) and "being principle", but the same applies to existence *a fortiori*. The question of how *'aql* can be derived from Avicenna's definition of God is the second major topic of al-Shahrastānī's epistle and thus of al-Sāwī's response. Al-Rāzī too worried about how to relate God's being principle to Avicenna's definition of God; see further below.

88 Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāra'a*, 36.5–18 and al-Sāwī, *Muṣāra'at al-Muṣāra'a*, fol. 101r.1–6.

89 Avicenna, *Dānishnāma*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, 79.10–81.9; Bahmanyār, *Tahṣīl*, 571.11ff.; al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 89ff; *Maqāṣid*, 114ff.

course, al-Shahrastānī is not content to let this improved version of Avicenna declare victory. He in fact rejects the non-entitativity of negational and relational attributes, arguing that since one can distinguish between such attributes, they do entail multiplicity. For instance the relation of “being a father” is different from “being an uncle,” and the negation “cutting of a sword” is different from the negation of “cutting of wool”. Hence al-Shahrastānī thinks that the only way to overcome the composition problem is to assume the equivocality of existence between God and created things—a position which may speak in favor of al-Shahrastānī’s Ismā’īlism, as Madelung argued.⁹⁰ Indeed, in his *Nihāyat al-aqdām* al-Shahrastānī ascribes to Ismā’īlīs certain views that are very close to the ones he adopts in the *Muṣāra’a*.⁹¹

Al-Shahrastānī’s argument was greeted with astonishment by al-Sāwī who—perhaps only dialectically⁹²—sought to defend Avicenna’s doctrine. His own response to the composition problem is to reassert the non-entitativity of negational and relational attributes. For instance he argues that God’s existence is distinguished from everything else through a negational attribute of necessity (*takhṣīṣ al-ma’nā al-’amm qad yakūnu tāratān bi-ma’nā idāfi aw salbī*).⁹³ Against al-Shahrastānī, he claims that if negational and relational attributes were entitative, this would imply that there are an infinite number of attributes belonging to every object. For instance every relation would relate to its object through a further relation, and so on *ad infinitum*.⁹⁴

Al-Sāwī’s interpretation of Avicenna is the same as the one suggested by al-Rāzī. It seems successful up to a point, solving the composition problem by defining God’s essence as existence along with the negational attribute of necessity and other relation attributes. However, al-Rāzī points out in *Muḥaṣṣal* that the univocity problem remains unsolved: why exactly does God’s existence have this negational attribute, where worldly existences do not? Even if we are not stuck with multiplicity in God, we may have to admit that all existents are necessary if God’s existence grounded the negation attribute of

90 Al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣāra’a*, 41.6. On this see Madelung, “Šahrastānī’s Streitschrift”.

91 Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, 128.15–130.18. For instance the second position is closer.

92 In the introduction to his response al-Sāwī seems to present himself as an anti-Avicennist (*Muṣāra’at al-Muṣāra’a*, 107v–108r). This is in tension with the common identification of him as a follower of Avicenna, for instance in Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna*, 8. This question requires further investigation.

93 Al-Sāwī, *Muṣāra’at al-Muṣāra’a*, fols 116v–117r. Al-Rāzī agrees in *Mabāḥith*, 1:110.11 that there can be this kind of individuation for existence.

94 Al-Sāwī, *Muṣāra’at al-Muṣāra’a*, fols 120r.6–121r.2.

necessity.⁹⁵ Al-Rāzī saw this as a decisive argument against Avicenna's denial of all quiddity in God. But of course, an easy way out presents itself: why not just claim that negational attributes need no causes? This is the response widely provided to al-Rāzī in the 13th century.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, al-Rāzī has other arguments against the idea that God's essence is pure existence with the negational attribute of necessity. For instance, he returns to a question posed already by al-Shahrastānī: what about the fact that God is a principle? Al-Rāzī points out that God cannot be a principle simply in virtue of "existence"; otherwise, every existent would be a principle. Neither can He be a principle through the attribute of "necessity", because it is a negational attribute and nothing negational can be a principle for anything real.⁹⁷ For him, the only way to escape these problems would be to postulate something besides the common sense notion of existence in God, which is a distinct God's essence.

3 Priority of Essence Over Existence

The question whether necessity in God is a negational attribute was taken up by al-Ghazālī, al-Mas'ūdī, and al-Rāzī in a different context. This time, one used the idea that necessity is something non-entitative to solve Avicenna's argument against establishing any essence for God other than the sheer necessary existence. For the composition problem has already worried Avicenna himself. Yet Avicenna did not discuss the composition of necessity and existence in God, as the later critics did, but the problem of the composition of God's essence and His necessary existence, in order to deny any essence from God apart from the necessary existence. Avicenna did not separate God's necessity from His existence in the way that would lead to the composition problem. Instead, he treated "necessity of existence" or "existence which is necessary" as a unified notion, and explained away all other positive attributes so as to avoid ascribing multiplicity to God.

The core of Avicenna's argument is that if God had a quiddity distinct from the necessity of existence (*wujūb al-wujūd*), then the latter would be either an accident of the quiddity or its necessary concomitant (*lāzim*). The former

95 Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 65–66. As noted above the final solution differs in *Muḥaṣṣal* from most other treatises: here al-Rāzī just accepts equivocity of existence thereby avoiding univocity problem.

96 See e.g. al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 2:574.7–8.

97 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1 124.18–23; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 77r.12–16; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:145.6–15; and *Maṭālib*, 1:298.19–300.4. This may go back to Avicenna, *Shifāʾ*, *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.4, 275.2.

assumption would give rise to the composition problem, and is hence ruled out. The latter assumption is also impossible: no concomitant can pertain to God's essence due to some other cause, because that would violate the idea that God is the necessary existent *through Himself*. If however the necessity of existence pertained to God due to His quiddity, two problems would arise. First, necessity of existence would itself be caused by the quiddity (*lā yajibu dūnahu*).⁹⁸ This may seem a strange inference, but it is in keeping with Avicenna's understanding of concomitance: concomitants are literally caused by the essences to which they belong. On the other hand, since concomitance for Avicenna means "following in existence" (*ittibā' al-wujūd*), God's quiddity would, absurdly, have to be prior in existence to its own necessary existence in order to ground that existence. Clearly this is impossible, because nothing can be existent before being existent.⁹⁹ (That same argument actually applies to all essences, showing that existence cannot be a necessary concomitant of *any* essence that would supposedly cause it.¹⁰⁰) God is thus devoid of any quiddity. A similar line of reasoning is developed in *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.5, in the *Najāṭ*, and in the *Ishārāt*, when Avicenna defends the unity of God. In all these texts, Avicenna shows by the same sort of reasoning that God is without individuating factors (*ta'ayyun* or *khuṣūṣiyya*) additional to His being a necessary existent. Toby Mayer has already explained that Avicenna rules this out by process of elimination, going through four ways that an individuating factor might relate to the necessary existence of God and showing them all to be impossible.¹⁰¹

The first post-Avicennan critique of this reasoning is found in al-Mas'ūdī, who bases his response on the aforementioned negational character of necessity. He claims that since necessity of existence is something negational, there is no composition problem,¹⁰² and then goes even further: even individuation (*ta'ayyun*) is a negational attribute.¹⁰³ We are about to see that al-Rāzī accepts

98 This argument is most prominent in *Najāṭ*, 558.5–17.

99 Avicenna, *al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt* 8.4, 275.4–276.15.

100 Cf. Avicenna, *Ishārāt*, *namaṭ* 4.17, 270.4–9. This is the second horn of Avicenna's argument against the essentiality of existence in the case of worldly essences. First he argues that essences can be conceptualized apart from their existences, an argument against the proposal that existence is a constituent (*muqawwim*) of essence (see e.g. *ibid.*, 47.8–14). Then he argues that existence is not an essential concomitant.

101 On the argument from individuation see Mayer, "al-Rāzī's Critique", 201–27.

102 Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, 253.2–5; cf. al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, 1:353.9ff. Apart from the aforementioned sources on the negational character of necessity one finds this idea in al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 86.5–14 and 118.16.

103 Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, 253.1–10. The goal of the Mas'ūdian argument is to commit Avicenna to saying that God is just existence with no additional difference from other existences which will invoke the univocity problem.

al-Mas'ūdī's conclusion against Avicenna that there is no problem about God's having both necessary existence and an essence which is distinct from it. Still he shows some hesitancy on whether one might use the negational character of the necessity of existence as an argument in defense of this position. In *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, he argues against al-Mas'ūdī that necessity is something positive (*thubūtī*). His main argument is that contingency is negational, because it means that an essence in itself entails neither existence nor non-existence; therefore necessity, which is opposed to contingency, must be positive.¹⁰⁴ He also argues against al-Mas'ūdī that *taʿayyun* must be positive because it is a part of the identity (*huwīyya*) of a thing.¹⁰⁵ To the possible objection that individuation has to be individualized through something else (and so *ad infinitum*), al-Rāzī simply stipulates that individuation is individualized through itself.¹⁰⁶ However, al-Rāzī also adds in *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl* that he actually thinks that necessity is negational, and has already shown this to be so in the *Mabāḥith*.¹⁰⁷ But when we turn to that text, and to the closely parallel part of *al-Masāʾil al-bukhārīyya* al-Rāzī allows both: if “x is necessarily y” means that x does not need any additional cause for y, then “necessary” is negational. If it means that x's essence is sufficient to entail the existence of y, necessity is a positive attribute.¹⁰⁸ In the *Maṭālib*, on the other hand, he does argue for the negational character of necessity.¹⁰⁹

Although al-Rāzī endorses the positive character of necessity in some texts, this does not lead him to adopt Avicenna's understanding of the Necessary Existent. He accepts that a positive construal of God's quiddity or individuation, and of the necessity of existence itself, implies composition in God, an implication Avicenna denied but al-Rāzī is happy to accept.¹¹⁰ This is evident from his analysis of another kind of non-entitativity: the “relational” (*idāfi*). Al-Rāzī accepts that necessity is a relational attribute, because necessity always

104 Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, 1:372.5–10.

105 Al-Rāzī, *Jawābāt*, 54.8–9 and *Nihāya*, 375.1–2.

106 Objection: al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, 1:355.11–4; response: 1:375.4. Both al-Mas'ūdī's position and the threat of an infinite chain of individuation recall traditional Ash'arite discussions of individuation and distinction (s. Benevich, “The Classical Ash'ari Theory of *Aḥwāl*”, 163). Al-Rāzī rather should not do this move because together with his acceptance of individuation through negational attribute he gives a way to Avicennists: why not say that God is existence which is individuated through itself and distinct from other kinds of existence?

107 Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, 1:374.7–8.

108 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1 207–8; *Jawābāt*, 52.13–53.9.

109 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 1 283–89. However, in *Muḥaṣṣal*, 66 he argues that necessity is positive (*wujūdī*).

110 Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, 1:376.2–7.

renders a relation between a subject and a predicate. This however serves him not to deny composition of God but to establish it, by proving that God has a quiddity apart from the necessity of existence: it is the *relation* between God's essence and His existence that is necessary. For the same reason, he denies a theory we found in al-Suhrawardī, that necessity is the perfection (*tamām*) of existence. A relation (that is, necessity) cannot be a perfection, claims al-Rāzī, most probably because a relation implies two *relata* whereas a perfection only one.¹¹¹

Neither does al-Rāzī make any serious use of the non-entitativity of *i'tibārī* notions.¹¹² He has no reason to do so, because he is untroubled by the prospect of composition in God. To the contrary, his central move is to deny the second horn of the Avicennan argument, which stated that God's existence cannot be a necessary concomitant (*lāzim*) of God's essence. Instead, al-Rāzī opts for the view that identifies God as an essence that possesses "necessary existence" as its essential *lāzim*. This position was anticipated by al-Ghazālī and al-Mas'ūdī. The former argued that both God's essence and his attributes (including "necessary existent") are pre-eternal and uncaused.¹¹³ Against the Avicennan argument that "necessary existence" cannot be a concomitant of God's essence, because it would be caused by this essence, al-Ghazālī responds that the fact that "necessary existence" follows (*bi-kawnihi tābi'an*) essence does not mean that essence is its efficient cause (*bi-'illa fā'ila*).¹¹⁴ He simply denies this Avicennan way of understanding the relationship between an essence and what follows from that essence.¹¹⁵ Al-Mas'ūdī thinks along similar lines, doubting whether it is a problem that "necessary existent" is a necessary concomitant of God's essence. Yet his argumentation does not really go

111 *Wujūb* as *idāfa* and not perfection: al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, 1:354.8ff. Though he seems to deny this argument at *Nihāya*, 1:373.1ff., he accepts it at *Maṭālib*, 1:296.6ff. For the argument against the Avicennan definition of God on the basis that *wujūb* always signifies a relation between subject and predicate, see *Mulakkhkhaṣ*, fol. 77r.11–12; *Arba'īn*, 1:146.9–14; *al-Risāla al-kamālīyya*, 46.25–29; and *Maṭālib*, 1:302.6–303.2; 303.21–304.16.

112 He uses it only in order to deny the idea that "being quiddity" is also said about God's essence but implies no multiplicity (*Nihāya*, 1:379.13–380.2). He also agrees with al-Shahrastānī that *wujūd* is not *i'tibārī* (*Nihāya*, 1:379.4).

113 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 98.1–5. In *Tahāfut*, 97.20, al-Ghazālī claims that all attributes depend on God's essence, without being its constituents. This may be an inheritance of Ash'arite ontology, which has no place for constituents at all (*aḥwāl* proponents like al-Juwaynī would claim that *aḥwāl* depend on the *dhawāt* to which they belong; see Benevise, "The Classical Ash'ari Theory of *Aḥwāl*", 169–73).

114 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 99.17–19.

115 For which see Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt* §1141, 322.

beyond al-Ghazālī's, to whose authority he explicitly refers.¹¹⁶ It was thus al-Rāzī's task to defend their position in a more elaborate way.

The first problem al-Rāzī faces is how to make sense of the idea that "necessary existent" or "necessary existence" can be a concomitant of God's essence while retaining its uncaused character. Al-Rāzī does not take al-Ghazālī's strategy of denying any causal relation between essence and its concomitants. Instead, he argues that "necessary existent" cannot itself be said to be necessary or possibly existent at all. Rather it is a predication about an essence, and not about existence. That is, these modal terms signify the necessity or contingency of the existence of an *essence*. To support this view, al-Rāzī invokes a point we have seen above, where it was used to block the regress argument leading to higher-order existences: existence cannot be predicated of existence. Contingency of existence simply means that a given essence may be existent or non-existent. How then can Avicenna argue that "necessary existence" would be caused (and hence contingently existent) if it were a concomitant of God's essence? To say this is tantamount to saying that God's necessary existence may exist or not exist; but one cannot predicate existence, to say nothing of non-existence, of existence.¹¹⁷ Another Rāzian argument for the same conclusion compares the relation between essence and existence in God to the relation between matter and form. According to Avicenna's own theory, form is independent from the matter despite inhering (*ḥālla*) in it. Why then not say the same for God's existence inhering in God's essence?¹¹⁸

But actually the problem of whether concomitants are caused is not al-Rāzī's main concern. He is more troubled by the second part of the Avicennan answer: in order for an essence to have the concomitant of existence, it would have to exist before having existence. By this time the argument was a widely accepted one, and found for instance in al-Suhrawardī.¹¹⁹ Although al-Suhrawardī accepts the argument in *Lamaḥāt* he rejects it as a weak one both in *Mashārī'* and *Talwihāt*. His reason is that the same priority problem would hold in all cases when existence is additional to essence, which leads al-Suhrawardī to a general rejection of the essence-existence distinction and to putting existence as something merely *'tibārī*. Yet al-Suhrawardī still wants to follow Avicenna in making the identity of essence and existence in God's case different from the identity of essence and existence in other cases. We have already seen his

116 Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, 254.15–17; 259.6–9. Cf. Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna*, 71.

117 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 1:308.14–309.4.

118 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 1:308.1–13. This argument does not really go through, since Avicenna himself provided an analysis of the matter-form case in *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.5, 281.1–5 and denied its application to God.

119 Al-Suhrawardī, *Mashārī'*, 390.2–4; *Lamaḥāt*, 220.18–19; *Talwihāt*, 34.7–13.

allowance that God's existence is an exceptional case of an extramental existence, which is just God's essence. In other words God's essence and existence are not distinguishable even conceptually let alone extramentally. In order to establish this position he develops an original argument: if we can conceptually distinguish in God any essence apart from the necessary existence, this essence would be a universal whose instantiations are contingent, so that contingency would apply to God's essence, which is impossible. On the contrary, if God's essence is just existence, it is instantiated necessarily.¹²⁰

Al-Rāzī rejects the priority problem on a basis that is diametrically opposed to that of al-Suhrawardī. The latter claimed that the argument does not obtain, because the same priority problem would have to apply to the worldly essences. Al-Rāzī however bites the bullet developing a fundamental feature of his metaphysics: the priority of essence over existence. There is no difficulty, as far as he is concerned, in seeing God's essence as a metaphysical ground (*mu'aththir*) of God's existence. Even worldly essences are prior to their existences, because the essences are receptive (*qābila*) of existence and in general, the receiver is prior to what is received (*al-qābil mutaqaḍḍim 'alā l-qubūl*).¹²¹ Of course this does not mean essences have first to exist in order to receive existence. Instead, for al-Rāzī worldly essences are in a neutral state before they become either existent or non-existent: the denial of existence does not entail non-existence (*lā yalzamu min isqāṭ al-wujūd [...] idkhāl al-'adam*), and essence *qua* essence entails neither existence nor non-existence (*al-māhiyya min ḥaythu hiya hiya lā thābita wa-lā lā thābita/lā mawjūda wa-lā ma'dūma*).¹²² This neutral state is the state of being contingently existent (*mumkin al-wujūd*). While they are in this state, essences do not yet exist; if they did, the contingency of existence would be posterior to existence.¹²³ Al-Rāzī hints to the fact that some concomitants (including contingency of existence) follow upon essence even before it comes into existence (*iqtiḍā' al-māhiyya li-lawāzimihā sābiq 'alā ittiṣāfihā bi-l-wujūd*).¹²⁴ There are other cases where, according to al-Rāzī, Avicenna would suppose some kind of grounding and "following" relation prior to existence. These include the constituents of an essence, which are its parts and are prior to essence itself, but not insofar as they exist (*lā bi-sharṭ wujūd*),¹²⁵ as well

120 Al-Suhrawardī, *Tabwīḥāt*, 34.14–35.17 (§25); and *Mashārī'*, 391.8–392.15.

121 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:129.14–18; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 78r.3; *Muḥaṣṣal*, 67.10–11; *Arba'īn*, 1:148.10–16; *al-Risāla al-kamāliyya*, 47.5–11; *Maṭālib*, 1:309.11–17.

122 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:129.10–13; 110.18–19; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 78r.15–17; *Muḥaṣṣal*, 67.8–9; *Arba'īn*, 1:88.8–10; *Maṭālib*, 1:310.16–17.

123 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:127.21–24.

124 Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 1:309.18–21.

125 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:127.9–20; *Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 78r.5–9.

as the individuation of an essence. This too must be in place before the essence comes into existence.¹²⁶

In this way, al-Rāzī is able to avoid the Avicennan argument that existence cannot be an essential concomitant of God's essence. But he does so at a cost: he must admit that essence is always prior to existence, in the case of both God and created things. As I have recently argued elsewhere,¹²⁷ al-Rāzī's doctrine of the priority of essence to existence should not be confused with Avicenna's theory of essences *qua* essences, since the latter would not accept that such essences are prior to their existence.¹²⁸ Nor should one confuse Rāzī's position on pre-existent status of essences with the famous "Mu'tazlite" theory that non-existent things are real before becoming existent.¹²⁹ The reason for this is that al-Rāzī explicitly denies this theory and eloquently argues that whenever essences are posited as non-existent they are not real in any sense.¹³⁰ After all, essences are "neither existent nor non-existent" for al-Rāzī and not just non-existent.

Hence one may be tempted to draw a parallel between al-Rāzī's "neither existent nor non-existent essences" and another famous theory of *kalām*: the "neither existent nor non-existent states (*aḥwāl*)".¹³¹ However this similarity is merely terminological. Al-Rāzī explicitly denies the latter doctrine as well.¹³² In order to explain the difference between the status of al-Rāzī's essences and *kalām aḥwāl* one should recall that in the case of *aḥwāl*, the status of being "neither existent nor non-existent" belongs only to *aḥwāl*, and belongs to them permanently. In other words, for them a *ḥāl* can *never* become existent or non-existent, but stays in the neutral state whenever they are real. By contrast, for al-Rāzī when we consider essences to be "neither existent nor non-existent"

126 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:128.5–13; cf. *Nihāya*, 1:375.12–14.

127 Benevich, "Essence-Existence Distinction".

128 Among medieval scholars, al-Ghazālī certainly believed that essence is prior to existence for Avicenna; see Griffel, *Philosophical Theology*, 170–71 and al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 88.19. Against such interpretation see Bertolacci, "Essence-Existence Distinction", and my "Göttliche Existenz", 125.

129 For this theory see Frank, "Al-Ma'dūm wal-Mawjūd"; Klein-Franke, "The Non-Existent is a Thing"; Wisnovsky, "Avicenna's Metaphysics", 146–49.

130 Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:134–37; *Mulakḥḥaṣ*, fol. 80r.11–16; *Muḥaṣṣal*, 56–58; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:82–100. On al-Rāzī's rejection of the non-existent but real and his way of dealing with the Mu'tazilite arguments in sake of this doctrine see my "The Reality of The Non-Existent Object of Thought".

131 For this theory see Frank, "Abu Hashim's Theory of 'States'"; Benevich, "The Classical Ash'ari Theory of *Aḥwāl*", 167–73; Thiele, "Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī's (d. 321/933) Theory of 'States'".

132 Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 61.1–3 and *Mabāḥith*, 1:132–33.

we are abstracting them from a real situation in which essences are in fact existent. Thus al-Rāzī states in *Mabāḥith* and in *Arbaʿīn* that the contingency of existence does not have to mean possible existence or non-existence in the future (*mustaqbal*). It can also apply to essences that already exist.¹³³ Hence, his idea of the “neither existent nor non-existent” is significantly different from that of the proponents of *aḥwāl*. Rather we should prefer the explanation which situates it in the Avicennan metaphysical framework (although it is not just Avicenna’s view itself). This approach lays great emphasis on the abstraction of essential attributes of an essence from its accidental attributes. For worldly essences, neither existence nor non-existence would fall on the essential side of this distinction; only in God’s case existence is essential.

4 Concluding Remarks

If one wants to place the Rāzian metaphysics of the Necessary Existent within a broader historical context, the most proper solution would be to see him as carrying on the project of al-Ghazālī and al-Masʿūdī. All three see God as an essence that possesses necessary existence as its essential concomitant. Especially al-Masʿūdī is of relevance for al-Rāzī, because it is most probably to him that al-Rāzī owes his central argument against the Avicennan conception of God, namely the univocity problem. Yet al-Rāzī goes beyond al-Ghazālī and al-Masʿūdī, further developing all the metaphysical distinctions and puzzles found in earlier discussions of the Necessary Existent. For instance, he invokes the univocity argument against the idea that we possess transcendental knowledge of God. Whether he means to do so or not, he here strikes at the heart of Abū l-Barakāt’s conception of God. Al-Rāzī also hints at the problem that God cannot be a principle just in virtue of a negational attribute, and in so doing recalls a discussion of this point found in al-Shahrastānī. In another area, though, al-Rāzī is less concerned to engage with the previous debate. Numerous post-Avicennan figures worried about the entitativity of predications applied to God, and asked whether such predications might imply that God is multiple. These figures included Khayyām, al-Shahrastānī, al-Sāwī, Ibn Ghaylān, and al-Suhrawardī. Of course al-Ghazālī and al-Masʿūdī also discussed the problem of non-entitativity, but in their case this was in order to reject Avicenna’s argument against God having any quiddity. In other words, non-entitativity of some attributes like “necessity” and “existence” was either used to defend Avicenna’s definition of God as the Necessary Existent

¹³³ Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1 117.6–13 and *Arbaʿīn*, 1:84.19–85.21.

from those who saw a composition problem in this definition; or it was meant to defend, from Avicenna's accusations of composition, the view that God does have an essence which is distinct from His existence. Al-Rāzī too discusses non-entitativity, for instance in order to secure his understanding of existence and necessity. But the prospect of multiplicity and composition in God is simply not a problem for him: his God is complex; He has an essence to which at least some attributes such as the necessary existence pertain as necessary concomitants.

Finally, we might ask whether al-Rāzī's conception of God is really anti-Avicennan. We saw in the first section that Avicenna already acknowledged the univocity problem. Al-Rāzī was aware of this: in his *Mabāḥith*, he provides a long quote on this point from Avicenna's *Mubāḥathāt*. There, and also in the *Ta'liqāt*, Avicenna goes so far as to accept that existence as such (*wujūd muṭlaq*), which sounds like the univocal existence so important to al-Rāzī, is a necessary concomitant (*lāzim*) of God's essence. And this is precisely al-Rāzī's solution to the univocity problem. Al-Rāzī acknowledges this in *Mabāḥith*, though he wonders whether Avicenna would really agree that existence is something extrinsic to God's essence. It seems from *Mubāḥathāt* and *Ta'liqāt* that he would. On the other hand, in both treatises Avicenna claims that God's essence is existence itself, and calls this existence "being necessary" (*wājibīyya*), which suggests that divine existence is not univocal with created existence.¹³⁴ Al-Rāzī says that if we follow this line of thought, then we will have to admit that existence is equivocal—for "being necessary" would obviously be intensionally distinct from existence in ordinary sense, which for him is the existence that is concomitant to God's essence. In al-Rāzī's interpretation, this Avicennan view amounts to saying that God has an essence, which is called existence only equivocally, whereas the univocal common sense existence belongs to it as an extrinsic necessary attribute. One existence (equivocal) has another existence (univocal). Obviously, this position does not significantly differ from al-Rāzī's own theory: God has an essence—let them equivocally call it "existence"—which has an extrinsic concomitant of being existent. Another route, though, would be to say that divine essence is less than fully equivocal; that is, to accept the notion of *tashkīk al-wujūd*. A more developed version of this solution will of course be found later in Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, who will develop hints found in Avicenna, Abū l-Barakāt, and al-Suhrawardī. With this theory, God has an essence which is the perfect existence; existence is predicated of it and other existences analogically; such existence has the common sense existence

¹³⁴ Avicenna, *Mubāḥathāt* 387–91, 140–42 (cf. al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 1:122–24 and *al-Risāla al-kamālīyya*, 45.23) and *Ta'liqāt*, 265–67, 170–71.

as its necessary concomitant. Most of the critics of Avicenna in the period we have examined would deny that analogy of existence is any better than outright equivocation of existence. Whether al-Ṭūsī, or anybody else, has provided good responses to their arguments, is a question worthy of further study. Yet, as was noted in the end of the first section, it appears that their analysis of the *tashkīk* of existence actually agrees with al-Rāzī's theory and Avicenna's assumptions in *Mubāḥathāt* that the univocal existence is just a concomitant of God and not God's essence itself. The crux of the debate then turns around the special kind of existence (*wujūd khāṣṣ*) which is God's essence: can we say that it is "existence" only equivocally, as al-Rāzī would claim, or it is existence in an analogical sense, where God's existence is the perfected existence, to which "existence" applies most properly? In any case, none of the aforementioned authors regardless on which side of the debate they are would accept that God's essence is just "existence" in the common univocal sense of this word.¹³⁵

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Causing an Essence

Notes on the Concept of Ja'l al-Māhiyya, from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī to Mullā Ṣadrā

Bilal Ibrahim

The concept of “causing an essence” (*ja'l al-māhiyya*) becomes a prominent topic of discussion in works of post-classical Islamic thought, from texts of *kalām* to sources on philosophical Sufism. This article provides a sketch of problems, from mereology to the status of divine knowledge, discussed under the rubric of *ja'l*.¹ The concept emerges in the philosophical works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and is then incorporated into later works of *kalām* by a long line of thinkers, including al-Ījī (d. c. 756/1355), al-Taftāzānī (d. 791/1389), al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), and later authors down to al-Kalanbawī (d. c. 1205/1791). This tradition of post-classical Ash'arite texts of *kalām* will treat the concept as framed, almost exclusively, by al-Rāzī's *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya* (*Eastern Investigations*) and *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-ḥikma wa-l-manṭiq* (*The Compendium on Philosophy and Logic*). Alongside central texts of *kalām*, the concept is assimilated by a variety of post-classical thinkers and schools of thought, including the interpretations of the Illuminationists, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. c. 908/1502), and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. c. 1050/1640). The following provides an outline of the philosophical significance of *ja'l* in the eyes of post-classical thinkers.

Al-Rāzī seems to be the first thinker to devote a chapter to the problem of *ja'l*. His approach in the abovementioned works of philosophy becomes the central point of departure for later discussions in *kalām*. The concept of *ja'l* draws on a complex of concepts discussed in the first book of both works devoted to “general concepts” (*al-umūr al-āmma*).² Al-Rāzī's approach to

1 I would like to thank Andrew Arlig, Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele for their valuable comments and corrections to earlier versions of this article. The shortcomings that remain are mine. In the following, I translate *ja'l* as “making”, “producing”, or “causing” to distinguish the notion from “creating” (*khalq*) or “generating” (*iḥdāth*). As the following shows, though certain authors may connect *ja'l* to the latter concepts, *ja'l* is introduced independently of the question of God as the Creator of essences and independently of the temporal origination of essences or things. The concept is introduced in the above works of al-Rāzī chiefly as a mereological problem. The relation of *ja'l* to earlier *kalām* discussions of the status of the non-existent (*al-ma'dūm*) is discussed below.

2 On *al-umūr al-āmma*, see Eichner, “The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition”, 20, 47–51. Here, I translate *al-umūr al-āmma* as “general concepts”; though my translation, in meaning, does not depart significantly from “common things”, as Eichner translates it. I take

general concepts provides a framework for the analysis of simple and complex essences in the later tradition.³ In addition to tracing the major themes addressed within chapters devoted to *jaʿl*, the following discussion provides a preliminary assessment of the philosophical role of general concepts section. Some post-classical Ashʿarites, like al-Jurjānī and al-Siyālkūtī, develop views on the nature of essences, and the relation of parts to the whole, that depart from the classical approaches of *kalām* atomism and *falsafa* hylomorphism.

Before turning to al-Rāzī's texts, a brief note regarding the history of the problem of *jaʿl* is in order. Al-Rāzī assumes familiarity with the term and does not introduce its meaning or philosophical significance. It is likely that discussions of the topic emerge prior to al-Rāzī in the *kalām* tradition, but the provenance of *jaʿl* as a term of art, remains murky.⁴ Setting aside its textual history, the problem of *jaʿl* bears conceptual parallels to the classical *kalām* question of whether the non-existent is a thing (*shayʿiyyat al-maʿdūm*).⁵ To be

the emphasis in al-Rāzī's introduction to be the epistemic primacy and generality (*shumūl*) of each concept rather than their commonality with respect to existent *things*. Al-Rāzī considers the division or categories of existent things (*al-mawjūd*) beginning in Book II, as indicated by the title headings. Eichner aptly highlights various tensions in the list of items included in *al-umūr al-ʾamma*, which must be set aside here.

- 3 On the influence of al-Rāzī's works in the later tradition, see Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition", 351–471; 481–82. Ibn Khaldūn states, "[T]he later theologians mix the problems of *kalām* [with a broader range of philosophical problems] ... and transformed the order that philosophers assigned to the problems of natural philosophy and metaphysics and forged them into one science, and introduced to it a discussion of 'general concepts' (*al-umūr al-ʾamma*) ... as Imam [al-Rāzī] does in *Eastern Investigations* (*al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyya*), and everyone after him of the scholars of theology (*kalām*)"; *al-Muqaddima*, 481. In addition to the well-recognized structural changes attributed to his works, the following tentatively suggests that there is an important philosophical role for the new organization, and particularly the general concepts section of his works.
- 4 A preliminary survey of sources has failed to yield a use of the term as a chapter title or problem heading prior to al-Rāzī. Corresponding to its Qurʾānic usage, the verb, *jaʿala*, is used in classical works in a variety of senses, including "to produce", "to bring into existence", "to make from", and "to modify". On the lexical senses of the verb, see al-Rāghib, *Mufradāt*, 196–97. The term does not seem to play a prominent role in Avicenna. It is not one of the terms of creation that he uses. See Janssens, "Creation and Emanation", 468–76. An Illuminationist view of *jaʿl* will become prominent in the later tradition, as discussed below. In his commentary, Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrāzūrī (d. after 687/1288) supplies the heading, "On showing that the caused thing (*al-maʿjūl*) is the essence and not its existence", for a section of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's (d. 587/1191) *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. However, I have not found the term used in this sense in al-Suhrawardī. See al-Shahrāzūrī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 446–47; al-Shirāzī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 399–400.
- 5 For an excellent summary of earlier debates on whether the non-existent is a thing, see Wisnovsky, "Notes on Avicenna's Concept of Thingness", 181–87 (for a summary of *kalām*

sure, al-Rāzī will make the connection between *ja'l* and the classical question of the non-existent thing explicit in the *Muḥaṣṣal* (see, for example, T5, below). However, in the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, al-Rāzī does not refer to the *kalām* problem, nor to earlier *kalām* or *falsafa* positions on the topic. Rather, his analysis of *ja'l* proceeds with conceptual and definitional distinctions located within general concepts. Here, *ja'l* raises questions that are only indirectly addressed by the classical *mutakallimūn* as well as by the *falāsifa*, including Avicenna. In briefest terms, *ja'l* will consider two broad sets of problems: (1) whether an agent has a causal role in making an essence that very essence; (2) how mereological dependencies of parts-to-whole determine the existence of an essence. In the following, I discuss what the philosophical role of *ja'l* is for al-Rāzī and later thinkers.

1 Al-Rāzī and the Introduction of *Ja'l al-māhiyya*

Al-Rāzī provides a discussion of the problem of *ja'l al-māhiyya* in his two works of philosophy, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya* and *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-ḥikma wa-l-manṭiq*. With the exception of the *Muḥaṣṣal* discussed below, al-Rāzī does not, as far as I can see, discuss the problem in his works of *kalām*. This is notable since *ja'l* will be included in the major works of post-classical *kalām* as an independent chapter, as we will see below.⁶ How al-Rāzī's Book I on general concepts conceptually influences later approaches to philosophical problems requires investigation.⁷ The following discussion of *ja'l* suggests, first, that the various sections in general concepts (e.g. on existence, essence, contingency, and so forth) are philosophically interrelated. Second, al-Rāzī's aim in Book I is to provide a *general* or overarching frame of inquiry. From this general conceptual framework, al-Rāzī will develop specific positions that will bear on substantive philosophical and theological problems.

Here, a few points can be noted with respect to Avicenna's approach. Wisnovsky has pointed out that Avicenna in *Ilāhiyyāt* 1.5 criticizes a position that denies the thingness of the non-existent, a view the latter dismisses as

discussions); 187–221 (on the influence of the *kalām* distinctions on Avicenna and the latter's uses of *shay'yya*). See also Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 53, 57, 124–35; Frank, "Al-Ma'dūm wal-Mawjūd", 185–209; Ansari, "Al-Barāhīn al-zāhira", 337–48; Thiele, *Kausalität in der mu'tazilitischen Kosmologie*, 74–79; ٤١–٢٠.

6 This lends support to the proposal that the later tradition of *kalām* draws on al-Rāzī's philosophical works as models for the newly organized works of *kalām*. Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition", 351–56.

7 Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition", 47–51.

mere drivel.⁸ Avicenna's reference is ascribed by later commentators to some Mu'tazilites who distinguish between possible non-existents and impossible non-existents; the former, they hold, are things, whereas the latter cannot be called things as they are pure privation.⁹ Here, and in the rest of 1.5, Avicenna cannot be viewed as addressing the problem of *ja'l* as formulated below. As Wisnovsky shows, apart from this indirect reference to the Mu'tazilite view, Avicenna's concern with thingness chiefly serves the existence and essence distinction and the analysis of final and efficient causes, i.e., problems external to the *kalām* context (as well as that of *ja'l*, as we will see). There does not seem to be any specific text of Avicenna that articulates or implies the problem of *ja'l* as one that concerns causing an essence itself. To be sure, for post-classical thinkers, the locus classicus will become a report attributed to Avicenna regarding the question of whether God "made" (*ja'ala*) an apricot an apricot.¹⁰ In his treatise on the nature of contingency (*Risālat al-imbkān*, a.k.a., *Miftāḥ bāb al-muwajjahāt*), Ismā'īl al-Kalanbawī (a.k.a. Gelenbevi), the nineteenth century Ottoman theologian, points the reader to the problem of *ja'l*. In relation to the question of whether contingency is a necessary attribute (*lawāzim*) of the essence, he states,

Here there are two noble inquiries. The first inquiry concerns verifying (*taḥqīq*) that essences are not caused (*al-māhiyyāt ghayr maj'ūla*). Rather, what is caused is simply the [essence's] coming into existence. [The latter view] entails the subsistence (*thubūt*) of essences in themselves, as well as the subsistence of its parts that are predicated of it, and even the subsistence of its necessary attributes (*lawāzimihā*) in themselves without the intermediary of the causing of an agent (*bi-ja'li jā'ilin*). Therefore, a human being a human, rational, animal, body, substance; or four being four, number, and even; and a triangle being a triangle, a shape, and of angles equaling two right angles; and similar examples, is necessary in itself, irrespective of taking these essences with the condition of existence [i.e., as existing in external reality]. And this is indicated by the statement of the Shaykh [Avicenna]: "God did not make the apricot an apricot but rather God made the apricot an existent ..." [Avicenna's] intent is that

8 Wisnovsky, "Notes on Avicenna's Concept of Thingness", 193–94.

9 Wisnovsky refers to Mullā Mahdī Narāqī's (d. 1209/1795) commentary. Mullā Ṣadrā makes a similar point in his commentary on the *Ilāhiyyāt*. See Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ wa-ta'līqāt Ilāhiyyāt*, 80.

10 This is with respect to the immediate reception of the problem. As the discussion evolves, later thinkers will have various Avicennan texts bear on the question. See, for example, Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:375–98.

the object of causing (*ja'l*) is existence not the essences themselves, and that after causing (*ja'l*) the [essences] to exist in external reality or in the mind, they do not need a second causing (*ja'l thānī*) that causes the [essences] to be attributed (*muttaṣīfan*) with the essences themselves and their parts.¹¹

As stated by al-Kalanbawī, Avicenna rejects the notion that an essence in itself can be caused by an agent; an essence is caused only insofar as it is brought into external existence. I return to the details of Avicenna's view of the "tri-partite" status of an essence.¹² The position will be viewed by later thinkers as the Peripatetic view, as discussed below. However, there are several alternative approaches to the question. Here, we can distinguish loosely between two sets of concerns in the following texts. First, *ja'l* concerns the external agent's role in the causing or making of an essence that very essence. The possibility of external agency in causing the essence itself will be debated by various thinkers and groups. Second, *ja'l* concerns the internal constitution of essences so that relations of parts to the whole are analyzed as "causes" of the essence. With regard to the latter problem, Avicenna's position draws on Aristotelian hylo-morphism and the dependency relations between form and matter, as we will see. Al-Rāzī's analysis provides a more general analysis of parts to the whole, focusing on various relations of simples to complexes. This general frame of inquiry will lead later authors in a variety of directions. Here, I begin with the central texts of al-Rāzī on *ja'l* and then turn to the reception of his discussion in later works.

In the *Mabāḥith*, in the third section (*faṣl*) of his chapter on the essence (*al-māhiyya*) in Book I on general concepts, entitled, "On whether simple [essences] are caused (*maj'ūla*) or not?", al-Rāzī states,

11 Al-Kalanbawī, *Risālat al-īmkan*, 15.

12 Al-Kalanbawī goes on to discuss the status of necessary attributes (*lawāzim*) and cites al-Rāzī. He states, "As for the attribution of contingent essences with the necessary attributes of essences, like the evenness of four or the necessary attributes of one of the two existences [i.e., mental and external], like heat for fire and universality for human [respectively], that requires a second causing according to the verification of the *mutakallimūn* and philosophers, because all effects are connected to [God], the Sublime, *ab initio* according to the Ash'arites and by intermediary according to the philosophers, but the intermediaries they affirm are intermediaries with respect to preparation (*al-i'dād*), not with respect to existentiating (*al-ijād*), as Imām al-Fakhr [al-Rāzī] has verified in his books. So if you ask what is the meaning of intermediary in preparation rather than in existentiating, where preparation is not possible without existentiating a thing, I say ..." (*Risālat al-īmkan*, 16).

T₁

The prevailing view (*al-mashhūr*) is that they [i.e., simples] are not caused, because [A] if the blackness of black is in virtue of [something] other than it, black would not be black if we posit the non-existence of that other thing, which is an impossibility. There is a problem regarding this [argument], because [B] just as black has an essence (*ḥaqīqa*), existence likewise has an essence, so if it is impossible for black in virtue of being black to be caused (*majʿūl*), then it is impossible for existence in virtue of being existence to be caused. Then, there is no essence of black that is caused, nor is its existence caused. Thus, the existent black is uncaused in the first place, which is a contradiction. If it is said that the caused thing (*al-majʿūl*) is appending existence (*ḍamm al-wujūd*) to black, this is also a subtle fallacy as that appending also has an essence and it is also uncaused.

In sum, [C] everything that is posited to be caused (*majʿūlan*) possesses a reality (*ḥaqīqa*), which is either simple or composed of simples. So, if one holds that some simples are caused (*majʿūl*) then one should view the [same] of all [simples] and if not, then not.

The truth is that [D] the meaning of what is stated, that essences are uncaused, is similar to that which is stated, “Human is neither one nor many.” And you know [from what has been previously discussed] that the meaning of that is that unity and multiplicity are not internal to the concept of human not that human is [absolutely] denuded of both [concepts]. The same applies here, which is that the meaning of our saying that the essence is uncaused is that causedness (*majʿūliyya*) is not internal to the concept (*mafhūm*) of humanity because, as long as you are considering humanity insofar as it is what it is, there is nothing but humanity. But if you are considering its causedness, you have added to humanity a concept beyond it and that will not be the essence in virtue of what it is.

As for what they have claimed that this entails that black will not be black on the assumption of this other [cause], this is a fallacy because [E] if the other [cause] does not exist, we do not say that the black is realized (*mutaḥaqqiq*) and at the same time is other than black. Rather, we say that black is not realized in the first place and this does not entail an impossibility.¹³

Al-Rāzī provides a parallel section on *jaʿl* in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*:

13 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1143–44.

T₂

On whether simples are caused or not: [A] Those who object [to the view that simple essences are caused] are warranted in saying that what makes [a thing] in need (*al-muḥwīj*) of a cause is [contingency, which is a relational state that does]¹⁴ not obtain in simples. As such, simples are then not dependent on a causing agent (*jāʿil*) and thus they are uncaused ... [B] Those affirming [the causedness of essences] can respond: The composite is composed of things, each one of which is a simple. And upon the coming together (*ijtimāʿ*) of those uncaused simples, it is necessary that that composite obtains, without exception. Therefore, if the simple is not caused, the composite that necessarily obtains through the coming together of those uncaused simples will not be caused (*majʿūl*). This, then, entails the denial of causedness (*al-majʿūliyya*) in the first place, which is a contradiction.¹⁵

Al-Rāzī underscores several points that will be significant for how later thinkers formulate the problem of *jaʿl*. First, al-Rāzī focuses on the status of simples, as the title indicates. He suggests in T₁ that one's position on some simples determines one's position on all simples: "If one holds that some simples are caused (*majʿūl*) then one should view the [same] of all [simples] and if not, then not." Though less clear, he suggests in T₂ that one's position on simples determines one's position on the causedness of composites; at the least, he considers the objection that denying the causedness of simples entails denying the causedness of all composites. Moreover, he states, "If it is said that the caused thing (*al-majʿūl*) is appending existence (*ḍamm al-wujūd*) to black, this is also a subtle fallacy as that appending also has an essence and it is also uncaused." This, and his first point regarding "existence's having an essence", seems to be directed at the Avicennan position. One might consider this a polemical point on the part of al-Rāzī. By contrast, it might be viewed as a proper question given the context of the general analysis of simple and composite essences. That is, al-Rāzī thinks that the "prevailing" Avicennan account takes existence as a real attribute and so this requires an explanation of what it means to "add" existence to an essence.¹⁶ As we will see, post-classical thinkers,

14 This text is added in the margin. It seems to me to be part of the original text as the phrasing of this objection as found in the *Mabāḥith* corresponds to the omitted text. Cf. *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1:144.

15 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 49a.

16 In his analysis of existence in the preceding section, al-Rāzī states, "The verified position on this topic is that we hold that we do not mean by existence [anything] except the obtaining of a [particular] thing [in a spatial location] ... so whoever affirms something beyond that and calls it 'existence', 'existence' refers to their use and our use [only]

including Mullā Ṣadrā, will consider such questions as philosophically informative. Regardless, al-Rāzī's text is rather abstract and it requires further clarification. Here, I turn back to al-Rāzī's introduction to his chapter on essence, where simple and composite essences are defined. In his section entitled, "On the division of essences", al-Rāzī states,

T₃

An essence is either composite or simple. The composite is that whose reality obtains by the composition of many things [i.e., more than one thing], and a simple is that which is other than that. It is necessary to affirm a simple essence, otherwise all essences will be composed of infinite parts in actuality. As such, there must be a simple, since for every plurality (*kathra*), be it finite or infinite, a unit (*al-wāḥid*) exists in it. And if that unit is composite, it is not a unit and so then a unit would not exist in that plurality. If the unit is not composite, then it is simple.¹⁷

This section provides the basic definition of simple and composite essence that al-Rāzī will use in subsequent discussions. Here, a simple is not identified with specific concepts such as that of the indivisible atom of *kalām*, or the simple essences of *falsafa*, e.g., the intellects, form, matter, elements. The simple is simply "other than" a composite; that is, a simple is that whose reality is not obtained by the composition of other things. Moreover, a simple is posited not on the basis of the rejection of an actual (or even potential) infinite "plurality".¹⁸ Indeed, a simple essence is necessary to posit (*lā budda min al-i'tirāf bi-haqīqa basīṭa*) whether or not a plurality is finite or infinite. His argument for a simple, it seems, rests on the purely conceptual claim that a plurality would not be a plurality if there is no simple unit. Here, I focus on the question of *ja'l* and set aside how this definition of the simple and composite ultimately applies to al-Rāzī's own views of substances and accidents.¹⁹

homonymously"; *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1 133. The context indicates that al-Rāzī is addressing Avicenna's distinction between essence and existence. Al-Rāzī sees Avicenna as applying existence to essences rather than strictly to individuals or, more specifically, to the individuation of particular things in time and space. That is, al-Rāzī seems to think that, on Avicenna's view, a true cause does not individuate in terms of time and space. Although this cannot be resolved here, later thinkers will highlight the significance of this distinction.

17 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1 132.

18 This is perhaps a composite without a known or specified principle of composition or unity.

19 In short, he will distinguish between "homogenous" simples and non-homogenous complexes and further whether those homogenous simples are ontologically or merely epistemically basic. See the discussion below on later views of simples and complexes.

Returning to T₁ in the *Mabāḥith*, al-Rāzī begins by stating the prevailing view that simple essences are not caused. According to him, they oppose the view that simple essences are caused because of (A), namely, that the essence will not be the same essence in the absence of the cause or the “other thing”. That is, the blackness of black is dependent on some cause or agent external to the essence, and so black would not be black without the cause of blackness. The question concerns the identity of an essence and its relation to a cause. This problem, to some extent, evokes earlier *kalām* discussions.²⁰ His response to this objection comes at (E), where he states that in the absence of the cause of the blackness of black, one does not say that the non-existent black is not black. That is, his argument seems to be that one cannot affirm or deny blackness, or anything else for that matter, of a non-existent thing. As we will see, this is how later thinkers will interpret al-Rāzī’s response, though they will do so more systematically by distinguishing a simple denial from a metathetic affirmation.

At (B), al-Rāzī raises a problem against (A) as an argument in support of the prevailing position. Here, he states that just as black has an essence, existence has an essence. As such, he applies the same problem regarding the causedness of an essence to “existence” itself: What causes the essence of existence? I return to what this might mean shortly. Al-Rāzī asks the same of the view that it is the “appending” of existence to the essence that is caused (*maj’ūl*), and not the essence or existence itself. That is, he asks, What is the cause of the appending of existence? As noted, this latter position is what some later thinkers will identify as Avicenna’s position.

At (C), al-Rāzī advances a rigid rule: one holds that either all simple essences are caused or that no simples are caused. Here, one might wonder why? Is it a definitional point, so that al-Rāzī wants one to first decide whether causedness is included or excluded in our very definition of simple essence? Or is the dichotomy due to some other reason? The former option seems to be directly dismissed in the next discussion at (D), where he states, “the meaning of our saying that the essence is uncaused is that causedness (*maj’ūliyya*) is not internal to the concept (*maf’hūm*) of humanity”. In other words, the question is not a definitional one. Moreover, al-Rāzī assimilates the question of the causedness of the simple essence to the problem discussed in an earlier section of his chapter on essence, entitled “On distinguishing the essence from its necessary attributes (*lawāzīm*)”. In this introductory section on essence, al-Rāzī draws heavily on Avicenna’s analysis of the tripartite distinction of the essence in

20 On the example of blackness, see Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 53, and sources cited therein.

Book v of the *Ilāhiyyāt*.²¹ In T₁, al-Rāzī tells us that the distinction discussed in the earlier section is to be applied to the question of *jaʿl*. This would be influential to later discussions. It is worth noting that the question of *jaʿl* has no parallel in Avicenna's Book 5 or elsewhere. In Book 5, following his well-known discussion of the tripartite distinction of essence in chapter 1, Avicenna proceeds directly to an analysis of the relation of logical universals to universal natures and, specifically, the relation of genus and species, and the relation of universals to matter and form.²² That is, the mereological question of the causedness of essences will turn on the Aristotelian analysis of universals.

In the *Mabāḥith*, following the discussion at (E), al-Rāzī turns to the question of what the source of the cause of an essence is; that is, what makes an essence in need (*al-muḥwīj*) of a cause.²³ Here, he views contingency as the source of a cause. Those who deny that simple essences are caused argue that contingency cannot apply to simples since contingency is a relational state. Above, I have referred the reader to a parallel text in the *Mulakhkhaṣ* (T₂), which provides a shorter version of the objection. The section of the *Mulakhkhaṣ* begins with this latter discussion of contingency and omits points (A) to (D). In the *Mabāḥith*, the objector adds that a simple, "alone and insofar as it is not related to a thing other than itself", cannot be contingent, since contingency is a relational property that can only be said of a subject (*maḥkūm ʿalayhi*) and predicate (*maḥkūm bihi*) which are not one and the same thing.²⁴ To this al-Rāzī responds in the *Mabāḥith* with the following:

T₄

A possible response to this [i.e., that contingency cannot apply to simples] is to state that this entails that existence in itself is without need of a cause and if they stick to that and assume that that which is in need of a cause is the attribution (*mawṣūfiyya*) of the essence with existence. We state: [A] If that attribution is identical to existence, the same result is entailed. And if it is distinct from existence, and it is necessarily an existential thing (*amr wujūdī*), it is necessary that the attribution of its essence with existence has another attribute superadded to it, and an infinite regress is entailed. As well, [B] [we respond that] because if [the

21 Cf. Avicenna, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 5.1 148–57. See my analysis and comparison of this section in Ibrahim, *Freeing Philosophy*, 254–62. See sources cited above.

22 On the connections between Avicenna's logic and metaphysics, see Bertolacci, "The 'Ontologization' of Logic", 27–51; McGinnis, "Logic and Science", 165–86.

23 For an earlier discussion of dependency and efficient causation, see Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna*, 86–108.

24 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1 144.

essence] is simple, it is necessarily uncaused, and if it is composite, then the discussion of its simple [elements] and the structure [*hay'a*] of its composition is parallel to the [previous] discussion of the essence, existence and the relation of one of them to the other.²⁵

I return to the question of contingency shortly. However, it is notable that in the above texts al-Rāzī seems to force the conclusion on the opposing view that the essence, existence, or the attribution of existence has a reality or existential status (*amr wujūdī*) that needs a causal explanation. His problem regarding “attribution” at T4(A) is the same as that raised against “appending” existence to the essence at T1(B). That is, they are to be interpreted as real and requiring a cause. I return to al-Rāzī’s approach to the “reality” of these primary concepts. At T4(B), al-Rāzī points to the notion of “structure” (*hay'a*) as an additional element in the composition of a composite. That is, composites are made of simples and a structure. Elsewhere, he uses the term, “composing structure” (*al-hay'a al-ijtimā'īyya*).²⁶ The term will be used by later thinkers as a way to address the relation of parts to the whole independently of a form and matter analysis, as we will see shortly. For Avicenna, the question would turn on the nature of form-matter composites and the dependency relations elaborated in Aristotelian ontology. In al-Rāzī’s discussion, the concepts remain rather general and abstract.

To work out al-Rāzī’s full view on the question of causing essences (*ja'l*), one will need to assess related sections of his analysis of general concepts and sections of his two subsequent books. Here, I point to a few direct connections that al-Rāzī makes that show that his general concepts are interrelated. Of course, I cannot treat here all the relevant topics in the *Mabāḥith*, which spans several hundreds of pages, to develop a cohesive picture of his view. Fortunately, we have a shortcut. His work of exegesis, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, invokes the concept of *ja'l* in a concise discussion of cosmology. I tentatively take al-Rāzī’s commentary to reveal how his positions on *ja'l*, and related questions, applies to specific, substantive problems. Secondly, in the *Muḥaṣṣal*, al-Rāzī attributes positions on the question of *ja'l* to various schools of thought and thinkers. His more abstract analysis in the *Mabāḥith* can be compared with the more specific doctrinal positions in the latter work.

Given the above, one would expect the analysis of contingency to be directly relevant to the question of causing essences. In Chapter 4 of his book on

25 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriḳīyya*, 1144.

26 Ibrahim, *Freeing Philosophy*, 152–61.

general concepts, al-Rāzī treats necessity, contingency, and impossibility. In the seventh section of the chapter, entitled “How contingency is attributed to essences” (*fī kayfiyyat ‘urūd al-inkān lil-māhiyyāt*), he is especially troubled by the question of how a simple essence can be viewed as contingent.²⁷ Again, he discusses the problem with reference to the Avicennan tripartite distinction, asking whether essences, if taken without the condition of anything (*lā bi-sharṭi shay’*) and considered insofar as it is what it is (*min ḥaythu hiya hiya*), can be viewed as possessing contingency “with respect to itself”. Here, he trots out the same problem noted above regarding whether contingency, as a relational property, can occur to singular things (*mufradāt*). Al-Rāzī concludes the discussion by pointing the reader to the above section on causing essences, “The solution [to this problem] is what we have discussed in the chapter on essence, and that singular essences are caused (*maj’ūla*).”²⁸

Though it was not entirely clear in the texts of T1 and T2, al-Rāzī’s own position seems to be that simples *are* caused, though given the caveats and clarifications he endorses it is unclear what this precisely amounts to. For example, in T1 (D), he states that the “truth” is that causedness is not internal to the essence in the same way that unity and multiplicity are not internal to the concept of human. In his chapter on contingency, al-Rāzī assesses several problems regarding contingency, narrowing down his own views further. In the fifth section, he states that the “truth” is that contingency is not a real or existential property (*amr thubūtī*).²⁹ In the ninth chapter, he discusses the above question of whether contingency is the source or “what necessitates” (*al-muḥwīj*) a cause. Here, he ascribes the view to the philosophers (*ḥukamā’*). After citing the objections of “the dialecticians” (*al-jadaliyyūn*) who believe generation and not contingency is the ground of a thing’s need for a cause, al-Rāzī agrees, more or less, with the philosophers’ view. That is, he rejects the view that a contingent thing that comes to be need not have a cause or require a causal explanation (*wuqū’ al-mumkin lā ‘an sabab*).³⁰ Still, it remains unclear whether he goes the full length to affirm that contingency is the source of a cause in the same sense that it is for the philosophers. However, in the fifth section of Chapter 5, “On generation in time requiring the prior [existence] of matter and time”, al-Rāzī states,

27 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1 216.

28 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1 216.

29 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1 216. For the background of this debate, see Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna*, 109–42.

30 Al-Rāzī, *Al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1:219–21.

We have clarified our position regarding this [problem]. What the Shaykh [Avicenna] has relied upon is that every generated thing, prior to its generation, is contingently generated. This contingency is not a contingency that is ascribed to the [capacity of] the agent (*qādir*), because the validity of the capacity of the agent over it [i.e., to generate it] is explained with respect to this contingency, and the cause is other than the effect. Further, it [i.e. contingency] is a real attribute, otherwise there remains no distinction between it and between the negation of contingency. And [contingency] is a relational property, so it requires a substratum (*maḥall*) and if its substratum is generated, then the same discussion applies, so it is necessary that it terminates at a pre-existing substratum [i.e., prime matter]. We state that we do not concede that contingency is a real property, as mentioned.³¹

There is, of course, a long history of debate on contingency as a “dispositional” attribute, as held by Avicenna, versus the Ash‘arite view of contingency as a “negative notion”, as discussed by Shihadeh.³² Al-Rāzī views contingency as a mental and logical concept that can be applied to external reality by its use in statements and deductions.³³ More broadly, we begin to see here that al-Rāzī’s analysis of primary concepts spanning several sections of the book on general concepts, covering hundreds of pages in the printed edition, are interconnected. Moreover, it seems to be clear that they are interpreted with an eye to broader philosophical and theological implications. Those implications,

31 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 57a. Avicenna states, “Hence, the body that is generated—like, generated fire—the possibility of its existence consists in its generation from form and matter. Hence, the contingency of its existence has a substratum in a sense and that is its matter”; Avicenna, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 4, 2:137. For al-Rāzī’s closer reading of Avicenna’s views, see Shihadeh, “Al-Rāzī’s Commentary”, 317–18. The question of the ground of a cause becomes a central question that preoccupies al-Rāzī in several chapters in *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliya*, which can broadly be viewed as treating the principle of sufficient reason. See *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliya*, 1:91–121.

32 Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna*, 109–42. See, also, McGinnis, “Making Something of Nothing”, 551–75.

33 At the end of the chapter, he states, “When you append what we have mentioned here regarding necessity and possibility to what we mentioned in logic, you will not find anything falling outside of what is mentioned in this chapter.” In the logic of the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, al-Rāzī states that the position that contingency is a “real thing in external reality” (*amr thubūtī fī l-khārīj*) is not the case according to him (*laysa al-amr ‘indanā ka-dhālik*). He then contrasts his view with that of the *falāsifa* who affirm the existence of contingency in the present and future. See *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, fol. 16a. Some later thinkers seem to follow al-Rāzī on this point, see Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna*, 142.

moreover, are expounded in subsequent books of the work. For example, in concluding the final section, he states,

Know that the most significant problem concerning generation and eternity is whether generation is a condition for the need for a cause and whether pre-eternity obstructs that or not. We will postpone discussion of it to the section on the generation or eternity of the world, which is one of the most significant topics. We have postponed the discussion of it to the chapter on cause and effect, as it is more closely related [to it].³⁴

Though concrete philosophical and theological topics are alluded to in general concepts, al-Rāzī's views on *ja'l*, and its relevance to such problems, remain rather hazy. As the above discussion of the problem of *ja'l* suggests, the analysis of primary concepts in the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakkhkhaṣ* proceeds in a rather abstract manner. It is not always clear what school of thought, thinker, or doctrine he is addressing. Who, for example, does he associate with the "prevailing view"? Moreover, it is difficult to make out what his own views are without tying together various discussions and problems. This contrasts with the clarity of analysis and the systematization of the problem in later thinkers, as seen below. However, this should not suggest that al-Rāzī's analysis in general concepts has no systematic or doctrinal aim. Here, I turn to al-Rāzī's discussion of *ja'l* in two works that address doctrines and problems associated with *kalām* and *falsafa*. The first work, *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, treats *ja'l* in the context of *kalām* and *falsafa*. The second, *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb*, his commentary on the Qur'ān, relates *ja'l* to *falsafa* views in natural philosophy and its theological significance.

I begin with the *Muḥaṣṣal*. In his section on the non-existent, al-Rāzī states,

T₅

Abū Ya'qūb al-Shaḥḥām, Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī and his son Abū Hāshim, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt, Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī, Abū Ishāq b. 'Ayyāsh, al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad and his students claim that contingent non-existents prior to their coming into existence are entities or things or essences and that the effect of the agent is not in causing (*ja'l*) them to be entities but rather in causing those entities to be existent. They agree that those entities are distinct individually, and agree that what is real (*thābit*) with respect each class of those non-existents is infinite in number.

34 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1 232.

As for the philosophers, they agree that the essences of contingent things are distinct from their existences, and agree that it is possible for those essences to be divested of external existence, for we perceive a triangle even if it does not have existence in external reality. Do they allow the [essence] to be divested of both existences at once, external and mental? Avicenna states in the first book of the *Metaphysics* of *al-Shifā'* that it is possible, and others do not permit it. And they agree that those essences are not described as being one or many ... and they agree that essences are not caused (*al-māhiyyāt ghayr maj'ūla*).³⁵

T6

The non-existent is either impossible of existence, and there is no dispute in its being pure nullity, or it can be contingent of existence, which is according to us, and according to Abū l-Hudhayl and Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī of the Mu'talizites, pure nullity in opposition to the rest of the Mu'tazilites.³⁶

I will set aside the accuracy of al-Rāzī's attribution of views to the various authorities.³⁷ With regard to the problem of *ja'l* in the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, the discussion in the *Muḥaṣṣal* suggests two points. It is evident, from the latter work, that al-Rāzī is aware of differing views among various schools of thought. By contrast, his discussion of primary concepts in the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ* proceeds with very little references to those authorities. Regarding the problem of *ja'l*, it was unclear who held the "prevailing" view that essences are uncaused. Further, the relation of the problem of *ja'l* to both *kalām* and *falsafa* debates are made clear in T5. As noted, al-Rāzī's discussion suggests that *ja'l* as a problem existed prior to him.

Finally, the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ* address concepts that correspond to the above doctrinal views through a general analysis of primary concepts. With respect to *falsafa*, and specifically Avicenna, we have seen how al-Rāzī's view against contingency as a "real" property aims to address aspects of the former's ontology. With respect to *kalām*, and the Mu'tazilites in particular, it was noted that the question of *ja'l* parallels aspects of the classical problem of the status of the non-existent thing in Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite *kalām*. Here,

35 Al-Rāzī, *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 59.

36 Al-Rāzī, *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 57.

37 On the views of early authorities, see Frank, "Al-Ma'dūm wal-Mawjūd", 185–209 (on the infinite classes of non-existent things, see page 200 and sources cited therein); Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 57 n. 17; van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre*, 192–96.

al-Rāzī makes the connection clear, and distinguishes in T6 his view, and that of Abū l-Hudhayl and Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, of the non-existent from the majority view of the (Baṣrian) Muʿtazilites.

In his philosophical works, al-Rāzī develops views in general concepts on existence, essence, and contingency that correspond, and respond, to the above problematics. Though a full discussion of al-Rāzī's view of the non-existent thing is beyond the scope of this article, a few points need noting. His analysis of the status of the non-existent in the ninth section of his chapter on existence in the *Mabāḥith* proceeds similarly to the above discussion on *jaʿl*.³⁸ That is, he does not explicitly refer to schools of thought but addresses standard Muʿtazilite arguments for the extra-mental reality of the non-existent, including our ability to differentiate things prior to their existence and that they are subjects of affirmative predications. In addition to those arguments, al-Rāzī addresses the precise argument that introduces the problem of *jaʿl*, suggesting the connection of the two problems.³⁹ More importantly, as we saw in his analysis of *jaʿl*, he connects the problem of mental existence to other discussions both in general concepts and in the substantive sections of the work, including his chapters on essence and knowledge.⁴⁰ For example, al-Rāzī states that the error regarding the argument based on the predictability and differentiation of the non-existent thing derives from overlooking the doctrine of the mental existence of essences, which he states has been discussed previously.⁴¹ In the sixth section of the chapter on existence, which aims to prove mental existence, he argues *for* mental existence on the grounds of the predictability and distinguishability of mental items but *against* any further distinctions between impossible and contingent concepts *qua* mental existents. He argues against those who hold that "the subject of predication [i.e. possible things], even if non-existent in external reality, is nonetheless *real* (*thābit*) in external reality, as some have held".⁴² His argument, in effect, is that essences *qua* mental

38 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqīyya*, 1134–37.

39 Al-Rāzī states, "They also argue that if black is not black prior to its becoming existent but rather [black] only becomes black during its existence, it is necessary that black's being black is in virtue of an external cause, which is impossible." Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqīyya*, 1135.

40 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqīyya*, 1136, 137.

41 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqīyya*, 1136. On Baṣrian views of differentiation and existence, see Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 64–66. Al-Rāzī does not in his philosophical works go into the details of the Baṣrian doctrine. As suggested below, this could be due to the fact that he departs on the more fundamental grounds of primary concepts, and specifically his adoption of the Avicennan tripartite view of the essence. Al-Rāzī is drawing on Avicenna's discussion of primary concepts; cf. Marmura, "Primary Concepts", 159–61.

42 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqīyya*, 1132.

existents cannot be distinguished with respect to existence or reality (*thubūt*). At the end of the section on mental existence, he states, “a complete verification of this section will come in the book on intellect and the intelligible.”⁴³ The reference is to a lengthy chapter—over sixty pages in the cited edition—in the second book of the *Mabāḥith*. He begins in the first section of that chapter where he left off in the above section on mental existence, “Know that in the chapter on existence we have discussed that the intelligible essence has an existence in the mind, and here we will provide further clarification.”⁴⁴

Though his views on mental existence are relevant to the present discussion, it cannot be treated here.⁴⁵ Broadly, it can be noted that al-Rāzī is developing a line of thinking on *jaʿl* and the non-existent that moves against Baṣrian Muʿtazilism and *falsafa*. His approach supports the intuitions of the Ashʿarite approach to these problems, though earlier Ashʿarites, when they did elaborate their views, did not approach the problem in any systematic fashion.⁴⁶ They certainly did not articulate views that connect a general framework of primary concepts with related substantive philosophical questions on knowledge, essences, and so forth. Here, it may be proposed that, in the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, al-Rāzī is not distorting views or creating strawmen for the sake of argument. Indeed, he addresses the details of *falsafa* and *kalām* views in a variety of other works. Here, his emerging role as a “critical commentator” of Avicenna is especially significant.⁴⁷ However, in the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, as independent works of philosophy, al-Rāzī develops a broad framework for the analysis of primary concepts, where the most general views are expressed independently of preexisting doctrines or schools of thought. This approach assesses primary concepts prior to the elucidation of more concrete and specific positions on ontology. In this general approach, al-Rāzī abstracts from specific doctrinal differences and focuses on fundamental definitional and conceptual concerns. The “prevailing view” on causing essences as set out in the *Mabāḥith*, for example, certainly does obscure the complexity of approaches of earlier views, as elucidated in the *Muḥaṣṣal*. For example,

43 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1132.

44 Al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 1:439.

45 His view of knowledge as relational quality seems to be central to this argument. In his view, the correspondence of mental concepts to essences in external reality is not an “essential” correspondence but relational or accidental one. As such, his argument is that one cannot distinguish possible and impossible concepts in the mind with respect to their status in external existence. See Ibrahim, *Freeing Philosophy*, 289–304.

46 See, for example, Frank, “The Non-Existent and the Possible”, 1–37.

47 On al-Rāzī’s exegetical approach, see Wisnovsky, “Avicennism and Exegetical Practice”, 349–78; Shihadeh, “Al-Rāzī’s Commentary”, 296–325.

with respect to the differentiation of non-existent essences, al-Rāzī does detail the Baṣrian doctrine on “similarity and difference”, which involves the latter’s distinctions between the “Attributes of Essence” and “essential attributes”, as discussed by Frank.⁴⁸ However, al-Rāzī’s adoption of the Avicennan tripartite view of the essence will render the old Baṣrian approach obsolete. That is, discussions of the attributes of the essence in itself and in mental and external reality are conducted independently of a school ontology. As such, his interest in the general concepts section of the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ* seems to be to provide a schematic rendering of primary concepts that allows for a *philosophical* and *aporetic* approach rather than simply an *exegetical* approach to central problems.⁴⁹ As we will see, later Ash‘arite authors draw on al-Rāzī’s approach to move beyond the doctrinal positions associated with *ja‘l* and related questions. I now turn to an exegetical work by al-Rāzī that addresses the cosmological and theological implications of *ja‘l*.

As noted above, it remains unclear what al-Rāzī’s philosophical or theological agenda is in his discussion of *ja‘l*, and whether he has one at all. In his extensive commentary on the Qur’ān, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (*Keys to the Unseen*), al-Rāzī invokes the concept of *ja‘l* in his discussion of creation. Al-Rāzī refers to the concept with respect to the verse of the creation of human beings from clay at Q. 30.20, “Among His signs is that He created you from clay.”⁵⁰ He begins his commentary with a discussion of the verse’s reference to “clay” (*turāb*), which he states is, in virtue of its qualities, the farthest thing or body from receiving the attribute of life. He provides several reasons for this, including the point that complexes are more promixate to life and animality than simple elements. As we will see, he associates clay with “earth”, that is, the simple elemental substance of Aristotelian philosophy. However, he will distinguish between the elements as the fundamental substances and necessary constituents of the world and elements as empirical substances. He proceeds to discuss the various categories of simple and complex bodies, providing a synoptic cosmology of how the simple elements of the world mix and combine to form more and more complex things from mineral solids to animate and sentient entities. At first blush, al-Rāzī’s description seems to reflect the Peripatetic cosmos of

48 Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 64–66.

49 For al-Rāzī’s method, see Shihadeh, “Al-Rāzī’s Commentary”, 299–302. For a history of aporetics, see Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna*. In his introduction al-Rāzī states, “[I glean] what I have found in the books of the ancients and have read in the tomes of preceding authorities, choosing the core of every topic and avoiding prolongment and prolixity”; *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriḳīyya*, 1:88. See Eichner, “The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition”, 48–51.

50 Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 25:95.

Avicenna, which posits a hierarchy of simple and complex form-substances, from the simple elements of earth, air, fire, and water to composites constituting the more complex substances of animal and human. Notably, al-Rāzī's formulation emphasizes a transitional realm of phenomena where liminal entities, like insects and eggs, mark the transition points between various stages of complex biological things. He states that the highest levels in complexity of plants are proximate to the level of animals, the highest of which are proximate to human beings. In this synopsis, al-Rāzī underscores what he calls the "wondrously" contrastive phenomena of life (*ḥayāt*), perception (*idrāk*), and matter (*jism*), which constitute "signs" embedded in the manner in which God causes or makes (*jaʿl*) the world.⁵¹ But is there more to al-Rāzī's approach and inclusion of cosmology? Or is al-Rāzī simply appropriating the *falāsifa's* cosmology to supplement exegesis?

Critically, al-Rāzī takes the verse as an opportunity to examine the precise status of the *falāsifa's* approach to natural philosophy. Following the above summary, in the third problem (*masʿala*), he has an interlocutor raise the following concern: The verse conflicts with what natural philosophers claim, that human beings are composed of all four elements, not just earth or clay.⁵² In response, al-Rāzī states,

According to me, there is no problem with their view [that humanity is created of four elements] in terms of religious tenets (*sharʿ*) and so we do not dispute with them concerning it unless they state that this is so by means of [necessary] nature (*ṭabīʿa*). But if they hold that God through His wisdom created humanity from these things, we do not dispute with them with respect to that.⁵³

That is, al-Rāzī rejects specifically the view that humanity, as a species, is *necessarily* constituted of the four elements, thereby negating the role of God's will. Al-Rāzī then states that, as long as "nature" is not posited, there is no contradiction between the *falāsifa's* views and the Ashʿarite view. Notably, al-Rāzī here is not concerned narrowly with the status of secondary causation.⁵⁴ Rather,

51 Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib al-ghayb*, 25:96.

52 Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib al-ghayb*, 25:96.

53 Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib al-ghayb*, 25:96.

54 Al-Rāzī's approach can be viewed as contrasting with al-Ghazālī's approach, which seems to focus on the question of secondary causality and specific doctrinal conflicts with *falsafa*, such as the creation versus eternity of the world. Moreover, the status of al-Ghazālī's appropriations remains unclear given his audience-specific approach; and, as Griffel notes, he does not address cosmology in a comprehensive manner, leaving open

he states here that “the sensible appearance (*al-zāhir al-maḥsūs*) is specified [in the Qur’ān] because what is principally perceived with respect to material elements is earth and water [as opposed to air and fire], especially in their being apparent to us all in [the composition of] humans.”⁵⁵ Prior to the above, in the second problem of the commentary on this verse, al-Rāzī establishes that the significance of the Qur’ān’s reference to “clay” is not to be sought in how it *constitutes* the human species as an “essential part”, for the Qur’ān itself indicates clay is not the only ingredient. That is, at Q.25.54 and elsewhere, the Qur’ān describes human beings as created from water. Al-Rāzī finds the ambiguity significant and considers the following question from an interlocutor: Why does the Qur’ān not adjudicate whether the species is formed of water, clay, or both? More specifically, the interlocutor asks: Though the primordial parts may remain unclear to *us*, given our limited knowledge, why does God, the All-Knowing, leave the matter undetermined? To this, al-Rāzī replies,

T₇

There is a subtlety here, that is, clay and water being [made] principles [of creation] is not in virtue of the essences of the two [elements] (*laysa li-dhātayhimā*). Rather, it is in virtue of the causing (*ja’l*) of God, the Exalted, because in view of His power, it is befitting for Him to create, first in creation, “human” and then dismantle [human] and extract from it “clay” and then dissolve [clay] and obtain from it water. However, [divine] wisdom dictated that the deficient is a means to the perfect and not the perfect a means to the deficient. So [God] created dust and water first and made them principles to that which is more perfect than them both; indeed, to that which is more perfect than every being, namely, humanity. Then if their being principles [i.e., clay and water] is not due to some essential thing belonging to both but rather by the *causing of a causer* (*bi-ja’l al-jā’il*), then at times He causes clay to be the principle and at other times water, to make it known that it is by His will and choice. Thus, if He wills, He causes (*ja’ala*) this to be a principle, and if He wills He causes (*ja’ala*) that to be a principle and if He wills He causes them both to be principles.⁵⁶

many foundational questions. I see al-Rāzī’s approach as focusing on foundational *epistemic* distinctions, for example, between ultimate essences and sensible attributes and objects. A more comprehensive analysis of all this is conducting in a forthcoming study. On al-Ghazālī, see Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, 175–274.

55 Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 25:96.

56 Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 25:96.

I will set aside several questions that al-Rāzī points to in his commentary of the above verse regarding the role of natural philosophy and science. A few points can be highlighted specifically regarding the question of causing the essence or *jaʿl*. First, between rejecting *falsafa* views on natures and assimilating them wholesale, al-Rāzī parses between an essentialist versus a non-essentialist view of natural phenomena. On the essentialist view, elemental simples and complexes are interrelated in a necessary fashion, which is dictated purely by the internal or essential properties of things (*amr dhātī*). Thus, al-Rāzī focuses on this aspect of “nature”, in contrast to the earlier emphasis in the *kalām* tradition on its role as a secondary cause. Remarkably, al-Rāzī suggests that the Qurʾān’s ambiguity regarding the constitution of human beings aims to underscore—indeed, “to make known”—this very point regarding essentialism: clay and water are not made principles in virtue of their inner natures. Rather, they are “caused” or “made” to be simples for the more complex entity, human, to demonstrate divine wisdom, specifically, that the deficient is a means to the perfect. Here, the concept of *jaʿl* provides a way to discuss simple and complex things while avoiding the deeper ontological baggage of *falsafa*, and specifically the essentialism of Aristotelian natural philosophy. *Jaʿl* in this context also seems to contrast with the *falāsifa*’s views of emanation. Al-Rāzī’s preceding discussion aims to underscore the point that, rather than a natural emanation and combination of essences and qualities, nature manifests curious and “wonderous” (*ʿajīb*) contrasts like perception and life inhering in something as dense, heavy, and opaque as clay, which is the farthest of all simple elements in receiving life, perception, motion, and so forth. He attributes this to God’s causing essences in specific combinations, rather than to the necessary structure of nature. Here, it should be noted that al-Rāzī’s commentary moves beyond the standard *kalām* analysis of such phenomena, which tends to reduce all substances and relations of composition to the discrete entities of atoms and accidents. Here, I set aside the question of al-Rāzī’s own approach to complex natural phenomena and turn to the later tradition of *kalām*. Al-Rāzī’s approach to the question of *jaʿl* sets the stage for post-classical *kalām* discussions.

2 *Jaʿl* in Post-Classical *Kalām*

Discussions of the problem of *jaʿl* can be found in works of *kalām* written after al-Rāzī in the early fourteenth century or earlier, including in Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī’s (d. 702/1303) *al-Ṣaḥāʾif al-ilāhiyya* and ʿAbdallāh al-Bayḍāwī’s

(d. between 699/1299–705/1306) *Ṭawālīʿ al-anwār*.⁵⁷ The structure and content of both works are modelled on al-Rāzī's *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*.⁵⁸ However, I begin with a lengthier text of *kalām* and its self-commentary, namely, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* by Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1389). Like al-Rāzī, al-Taftāzānī begins his work with a book on general concepts, which starts with a chapter on existence followed by another on essence. In his chapter on essence, al-Taftāzānī devotes a section to the problem of *jaʿl*, with a slight modification of al-Rāzī's title: "Are essences caused (*majʿūla*) or not?" That is, he does not focus on simple essences. Al-Taftāzānī begins with the following: "Essences are caused, in opposition to the *falāsifa* and Muʿtazilites, absolutely, and some hold [only] simples [are uncaused]. And we have the [following] arguments [against the latter]."⁵⁹ In contrast to al-Rāzī's neutral approach in the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, al-Taftāzānī's discussion of *jaʿl* is clearly conducted in the context of Ashʿarite theology. By the qualification, "absolutely" (*mutlaqan*), al-Taftāzānī means that the Ashʿarites hold that simples *and* composites are caused, a point he clarifies in his commentary. By contrast, the majority of the opponents hold that all essences are uncaused, while some that only simples are uncaused. He states,

T8

After agreement that the existence of a contingent thing is due to an efficient cause (*al-fāʿil*), they differed with respect to the essence of [the contingent thing]. The *mutakallimūn* hold that the essence [of a thing] is due to the causing of a causer (*jaʿl al-jāʿil*) absolutely, be it a simple or composite. Most of the *falāsifa* and Muʿtazilites held that the essence is not caused by a causer absolutely. That is, nothing is caused (*anna shayʿan laysa bi-majʿūl*). Some of them held that composites are caused but not simples.⁶⁰

57 See al-Bayḍāwī/al-Iṣfahānī, *Maṭālīʿ al-anzār*, 49; al-Samarqandī, *al-Ṣaḥāʾif al-ilāhiyya*, 105–8.

58 Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition", 373–424. As Eichner states, "Al-Bayḍāwī's step to adopt this new structure was of outmost importance for the later development of Ashʿarite theology ..."; "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition", 373. There are, of course, other works, including al-Rāzī's own *Muḥaṣṣal*, that complicates any simple and direct genealogy between the *Mulakhkhaṣ* and later works.

59 Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:427.

60 Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:428.

Al-Taftāzānī proceeds to arguments *for* the causedness of essence, which is, according to him, the view of the *mutakallimūn*, by which he seems to mean the Ash‘arites. Here, al-Taftāzānī adopts the position taken by al-Rāzī that contingency is the source of the need for a cause, and discusses the question of how contingency as a relation applies to simples. In the next section, al-Taftāzānī takes up arguments against the causedness of essences raised by the opponents (*dalīl al-mukhālifīn*). Here, he repeats the precise point that al-Rāzī raises in T₁ regarding the essence being other than itself in the absence of its cause: “Those who hold to the uncausedness of the essence argue that if human being human is in virtue of an efficient cause, human ceases to exist when the latter ceases to exist. This, then, entails that human is not human on assuming the absence of the efficient cause, which is impossible.”⁶¹ To this objection, al-Taftāzānī states:

T₉

The response is: If it is meant that human is not human in virtue of a [simple] denial (*bi-ṭarīq al-salb*), we accept the impossibility of this. Because in the absence of an agent, [the thing’s] existence is also absent, so the essence remains non-existent such that the affirmation is false and its [simple] denial (*salb*) true. If, however, what is meant is [a statement made] in the manner of metathetic affirmation (*bi-ṭarīq al-‘udūl*), so that “human” obtains in itself with respect to external reality and it becomes a “non-human” (*lā insānan*), we do not accept this result. Because in the absence of the agent, human no longer subsists so that it can be the subject of an affirmative predication.⁶²

According to al-Taftāzānī, the above objection to the position that essences are caused fails to draw a distinction between a simple negation and a metathetic affirmation. A simple negation or denial (i.e., S is not P) is not problematic, because it does not affirm anything of human. Here, al-Taftāzānī evidently reads the predication as saying, “Human is not human in external reality.” Al-Taftāzānī, however, denies that affirming a cause of essences implies a metathetic affirmation (i.e., S is a non-P), which would affirm that human *is* a non-human. The problem will ultimately turn on interpretations of the truth conditions of statements, including negative statements with empty terms,

61 Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:431.

62 Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:431.

which I will set aside here.⁶³ It can be noted that al-Taftāzānī puts in logical form what al-Rāzī states in T₁ as a response to the “prevailing view”. Though al-Rāzī’s name is not directly cited, al-Taftāzānī does refer to the former in the following commentary. He states,

T₁₀

[A] What the Imām [al-Rāzī] mentions regarding the meaning of the essence with respect to itself (*min haythu hiya hiya*) being not caused (*maj’ūla*), just as it is neither existent nor non-existent, neither one nor many, and other attributes like that, in the sense that none of them are [the essence] itself nor internal to it, is not something that can be conceivably disputed, nor does devoting discussion to it have benefit.

[B] The most apt [response] is what the author of *al-Mawāqif* [i.e., al-Ījī] states, which is that *maj’ūliyya* can be used to mean “dependency on another [thing]” in a manner encompassing the part, and both [i.e., *maj’ūliyya* and dependency] with respect to the contingent thing is an attribute (*‘awārid*), and attributes are either *necessary attributes* (*lawāzim*) of the essence, like the evenness of four, so that if we conceive of four as not even, it is not four, or attributes are *necessary attributes of individuation* (*al-huwiyya*), like the finitude of the body and its generation, so that if we conceive of a body that is not finite or generated, it is [still] a body. And it is clear that the dependency of the contingent thing on an agent, with respect to both the composite and simple [essence], is [due to] the necessary attributes of individuation rather than of essence.⁶⁴

In the rest of the passage, al-Taftāzānī draws out the distinction between the necessary attributes of the essence versus those of individuation, the details of which I set aside for the moment. A few points regarding the above text can be highlighted. The above discussion is significantly more systematic than al-Rāzī’s more concise section. The distinctions attributed to al-Ījī assesses questions of the relation of parts to the whole in a clearer manner. Moreover, the dependency relations between simples and composites, along with the status of essential and individuating properties, is conducted in a general manner that breaks, to some extent, from Avicenna. For example, though, like Avicenna, al-Ījī distinguishes between individuating properties and essential properties, the latter is said to consider *maj’ūliyya* and the very dependency

63 See the important discussion of truth conditions in his introductory section, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:391.

64 Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:432.

relation between parts of the essence as a necessary property of the essence.⁶⁵ This recalls al-Rāzī's approach to considering how the status of the essence of states or events—such as, causing an essence to come into existence— informs the analysis. Of course, whether this is a relevant departure turns on how thinkers like al-Ījī apply such distinctions systematically in their works, which requires further study.

It can also be noted that though the chapter begins with a school-based approach, al-Taftāzānī's analysis quickly moves from defining school positions to the analysis of the philosophical distinctions at issue. His view that the position of the causedness of essences is that of the Ash'arites might be a later attribution, or projection of classical positions on the status of the non-existent onto the problem of *ja'l*. Notably, he concludes the section by stating, "But a dispute in meaning has not been verified."⁶⁶ That is, al-Taftāzānī wonders whether there is a genuine philosophical question raised by *ja'l* once we have sorted out the various terminological and definitional distinctions. The problem of the philosophical value of *ja'l* will be reconsidered by al-Jurjānī, to whom I now turn.

In the widely read text of *kalām*, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif* by 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, and its commentary by al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, al-Ījī devotes a book or *mawqif* to general concepts beginning with existence and followed by one on essence.⁶⁷ Like al-Rāzī, al-Ījī devotes a chapter to the problem of *ja'l*, entitled "Essences, Are They Caused or Not?" He begins by stating the following ("J" marks the interlinear comments of al-Jurjānī):

T11

The sixth section [maqṣad]: Essences (J: contingent) are they caused (J: by the causing of a causer (*bi-ja'l jā'il*)), or not? There are three schools of thought on it: First, that they are not caused absolutely (J: whether they are simples or composites) because if humanity (J: for example) is caused by a causer, humanity, in the absence of (J: the causing of) the causer, will

65 Compare 5.4 and 5.5 of Avicenna's *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, especially 173–74. On Avicenna's view of individuation, see Bäck, "Islamic Background", 39–53. Bäck states, "So the individuality of a sensible individual substance is an intrinsic feature of its existence *in re*. This individuality has the consequence of every individual's having a unique set of accidents at each time. But it is the material existence of the individual substance, the presence of the substantial form in matter that provides the active principle of persisting through time with a unique, though constantly changing, set of accidents"; "Islamic Background", 50.

66 Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 1:432.

67 On al-Ījī's works and its commentaries, see Dhanani, "*al-Mawāqif*", 375–96.

not be humanity (J: because that which is the effect of causing is absent upon the absence [of the cause] without exception).⁶⁸

Al-Ījī begins with the position denying the causedness of essences and provides that same rationale that was highlighted by al-Rāzī in T1. Here, in response to this problem, al-Jurjānī rattles out the same logical distinction that al-Taftāzānī provides regarding a simple negation and a metathetic affirmation. In the subsequent commentary, however, al-Jurjānī provides a more detailed discussion; for example, he makes clear that he reads the simple negation as “Humanity is not humanity in external reality (*laysat al-insāniyya insāniyya fī l-khārij*).”⁶⁹ Following the above text, al-Ījī proceeds to the second position on *jaʿl*, which affirms that all simple and composite essences are caused. As in al-Taftāzānī’s introductory text, the view is initially affirmed by al-Ījī and al-Jurjānī. Al-Ījī’s main argument for the position states that if essences are not caused, then nothing is caused (“If the essence is not cause, then causedness ceases altogether (*irtafaʿa majʿūliyya muṭlaqan*)”).⁷⁰ The argument is the same as the one provided by al-Rāzī in T2: “This, then, entails the denial of causedness (*naḥy al-majʿūliyya*) in the first place.”

Here, the authors turn to consider a question that addresses more concrete questions of ontology. Recall that, beginning with al-Rāzī, the analysis of simple and composite essences proceeded in a general or abstract fashion; it remained unclear how problems, such as *jaʿl*, relate to classical positions on atomism and hylomorphism. Here, al-Jurjānī discusses the kinds of composite essences that obtain in external reality. He focuses on composites that possess physical magnitude or extension, and sets aside form and matter to “whoever affirms those things.”⁷¹ Al-Jurjānī begins with composite entities that are constituted of parts with distinct essences, like “a single tree”, which he refers to as “one in virtue of composition (*al-wāḥid bi-l-ijtimāʿ*).”⁷² He contrasts this kind of composite unity with the unity obtained through contact or “contiguity” (*al-wāḥid bi-l-ittiṣāl*), e.g., bodies that are right next to each other. Al-Jurjānī states regarding the first type of composite, i.e., the unity in virtue of composition:

68 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:40.

69 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:41.

70 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:42.

71 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:42.

72 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:43. Here, it seems al-Jurjānī addresses the third position, namely, that only composites are caused, but without quoting al-Ījī’s text. He seems to only return to al-Ījī’s text after discussing the division of composites and simples.

T₁₂

For it is composed of extended parts that differ with respect to their essence, in contrast to a simple body like water, according to the doctrine of the atom, since the parts of [water], though they exist in actuality and as being composed, are similar in essence.⁷³

Al-Jurjānī's reference to atomism here is rather puzzling. He distinguishes a composite, like tree, which is composed of parts that differ in essence (e.g., bark, leaf, etc.), from a "simple" essence, like water, which is composed of similar parts. Here, he says that the atomists view water as a "simple body" in contrast to a tree, which is a rather curious claim. That is, one who holds to the atomism of Ash'arite *kalām* effaces any ontological difference between a composite like tree and an alleged simple like water, since the only true substance is the indivisible atom.⁷⁴ All composites, homogenous or otherwise, have no real unity and reduce to atoms and accidents. As such, it is hard to see how an atomist can view water as a simple body. According to the Ash'arite analysis, water is just as much an accidental unity as a tree. Al-Jurjānī seems to be alluding to some distinction available to the *mutakallimūn*. Here, the glosses on al-Jurjānī's commentary furnishes us with some critical insights.

In a gloss on al-Jurjānī's commentary, the Ottoman theologian Ḥasan Çelebī al-Fanārī (d. 886/1481) raises the precise problem noted above:

It has been said [regarding al-Jurjānī's comment]: There is then no distinction remaining between a tree and water, because a tree also divides into homogenous atoms according to the one holding to atomism. I respond [to that objection] with the possibility of accidents applying to [lit: entering] the essences of bodies. Indeed, [I assert] the necessity of this according to those claiming homogeneity (*tajānus*), just as the author [al-Ījī] states in the section (*al-mawqif*) on substance. Thus, a tree divides into heterogenous things, which are the [simple] elements.⁷⁵

Al-Fanārī suggests that the atomist is not committed to the view that all things beyond atoms and accidents are simply accidental unities. But it remains unclear how a *mutakallim* might make such a distinction. In this regard, another glossator, operating in the Indian Subcontinent, 'Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Siyālkūtī (d. 1067/1656) underscores a fundamental distinction:

73 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:43.

74 See Frank, "The Ash'arite Ontology", 199–206, and sources quoted above.

75 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:43.

T13

For those who hold that indivisible atoms are homogenous, it is not necessary that the composite and simple body is of the same genus, since the accidents by which simple bodies differ are constitutive of the [complex bodies] according to them. Hence, the complex body divide into extended parts that are not homogenous like the elements [which differ in terms of being fire, earth, etc.], and simple bodies divide into parts that are homogenous.⁷⁶

The critical point raised by al-Fanārī and al-Siyālkūtī is the following: accidental properties or attributes (*ʿawāriḍ*) can combine with simple parts or atoms to produce composite essences. These composite essences, moreover, are not simply accidental unities or bundles of atoms but differ in genus from the latter, i.e., they are in some sense “real”, whether or not they can ultimately be reduced to atoms. As al-Fanārī suggests, the nature of composites, and specifically the relations between accidental properties and parts, was already discussed by al-Ījī in his book on substance. There, al-Ījī and his commentator argue that bodies need not be viewed as homogenous and that the atom is not the only kind of substance or body that can be said to exist. Composite things, and even simple essences like water and fire, can be viewed, in some sense, as real entities.⁷⁷

Most significantly, this discussion of composites is viewed as departing from the approach of the *falāsifa*, who argue that the four elements have internal natures constituted of species forms. Here, al-Ījī and al-Jurjānī state, “Bodies are not homogenous, so that the difference (J: is then between them and not in virtue of constitutive forms and substantial natures, rather) [the difference] is in virtue of attributes [specified] by the Willing Agent.”⁷⁸ As Ashʿarites, the authors aim to provide an alternative analysis of composites that oppose forms and natures, which, as they indicate, involve a necessary ontology. This echoes al-Rāzī’s concern discussed earlier in his *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*. Here, we see that the terms, “simple” and “composite”, take on a new meaning that departs from the *falsafa* views of substance, form and matter. Moreover, the terms complicate the classical *kalām* views. The distinction developed above that substance *plus* accident can produce a new (composite) substance is especially significant, as

76 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:43.

77 Whether lack of homogeneity is taken to mean that composite essences differ *in essence* from each other and from atoms is a question I set aside. The following suggests that some did hold this view.

78 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 7:139.

it radically departs from the Aristotelian position on hylomorphic substances, where accidents cannot be constitutive of a substance. In the sections on the essence following the above discussion of *jaʿl*, the attribute that unites parts to produce a composite essence is referred to as the “composing structure” (*al-hayʾa al-ijtimāʾiyya*), which al-Rāzī points to in T4.⁷⁹ An analysis of its interpretation in post-classical *kalām* is beyond the scope of this paper.⁸⁰ How later thinkers receive, interpret, and apply al-Rāzī’s view requires study. However, the above suggests that al-Rāzī’s approach in general concepts seems to expand the frame of inquiry and how later *kalām* thinkers treat philosophical questions.

Returning to the text of *al-Mawāqif*, after raising objections to the third view that only composites are caused, al-Ījī states: “Know that this problem is a quagmire (J: on which the feet of thinkers have slipped) and we intend to firm up your feet (J: on this question) by means of a subtle pointer towards the crux of the debate and the source of the schools [of thought on the problem].”⁸¹ Al-Ījī then provides a synopsis of the problem, and delves first into what he terms the philosophers’ (*ḥukamāʾ*) distinctions between mental and external existence. The upshot of his discussion is a reconciliation of differences, similar to that of al-Taftāzānī in the latter’s concluding section. Here, al-Ījī suggests that opposing views and schools of thought largely boil down to terminological differences and confusions. Al-Jurjānī states, “The position of denying causedness absolutely and affirming it absolutely are both correct.”⁸² He even provides a “correct” interpretation of the third position, which holds that only composites are caused.⁸³ I set aside the details of this detente that al-Ījī and al-Jurjānī aim to achieve with respect to *jaʿl*. It can simply be noted that al-Jurjānī agrees with al-Ījī and attempts to fully reconcile varying views.

Crucially, according to al-Jurjānī, after sorting out the basic distinctions, the problem of *jaʿl* has little philosophical value: “There is little benefit in specifying the problem of causedness.”⁸⁴ According to al-Ījī and al-Jurjānī, it seems that there is nothing that the problem of *jaʿl* adds to existing discussions of the concepts of existence, essence, contingency, causation, and so forth. This

79 See, for example, al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:57–59.

80 For a preliminary discussion of al-Rāzī’s notion of a substance-plus-accident ontology against the Aristotelian form-matter ontology of the *falāsifa*, see Ibrahim, *Freeing Philosophy*, 152–61. In a forthcoming work, I examine al-Rāzī’s “attributionist” approach in further detail.

81 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:45.

82 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:53.

83 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:53.

84 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:50.

tension seems to already be present in al-Rāzī's approach to the problem in the general concepts section of the *Mabāḥith* and the *Mulakkhkhaṣ*, where he refers to several sections and problems external to the chapter.

However, we find an opposing attitude that finds *ja'l* a philosophically significant problem, at least in the context of later schools of philosophical theology. Al-Siyālkūtī takes issue with the reduction of the problem to terminological quibbling. He states that al-Ījī's view suggests "the persistence of the masses of esteemed thinkers in a [simple] terminological debate".⁸⁵ That is, the resilience of the problem in the history of *kalām* suggests that there is a philosophical issue at its heart. Addressing al-Jurjānī's conclusion, al-Siyālkūtī states:

T14

That is, [al-Jurjānī means] the dispute is terminological (*lafẓī*). You have come to know the nature of what he has formulated. And the correct view is what we have formulated at the beginning of the inquiry, that the dispute is meaningful (*ma'nawī*). The difference concerns whether [A] essences themselves are effects of an agent and whether the essence being existent is purely a mentally abstracted concept, or whether [B] essences are essences in virtue of themselves, and the causing of an agent concerns the attribution of an essence with existence. Those who hold to the concreteness of existence (*'ayniyyat al-wujūd*) hold to the first. And those who hold to the superaddedness of existence (*ziyādat al-wujūd*) hold to the second. This [latter view] is what the Verifier al-Dawānī has stated in his works and has conclusively elucidated. It is the view adopted by the commentator of *Hikmat al-'ayn* [i.e., Ibn Mubārakshāh al-Bukhārī] in its marginalia (*minhiyyāt*).⁸⁶ And the commentator [al-Jurjānī], God sanctify his soul, indicates this in his glosses on it [i.e., in al-Jurjānī's glosses on Ibn Mubārakshāh's commentary on *Hikmat al-'ayn*]. A matter remains however and that is: The position (*martaba*) of [God's] Knowledge is prior to *ja'l*. As such, essences with respect to [divine] knowledge are distinct and plural without *ja'l* being connected to it. Then how does one state that essences themselves are effects of *ja'l*. Unless it is said that multiplicity and plurality is caused by (*bi-sabab*) divine knowledge so that it becomes in themselves caused by a noetic causing (*al-ja'l al-'ilmī*), even if it is not caused in terms of external causing. Indeed, [it is true] what the author states that this problem is a quagmire.⁸⁷

85 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:50.

86 On *minhiyyāt*, see Gacek, "Taxonomy of Scribal Errors", 230.

87 Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3:53.

Al-Siyālkūtī's last point regarding *al-ja' l al-'ilmī*, divine noetic causation, suggests a return of the question of the non-existent thing in a new context of philosophical theology. The philosophical application of *ja' l* is clearer in this theological context, in contrast to the more abstract *kalām* discussions above. The philosophical context of the discussion in T14 is well beyond the scope of this paper. What can be gleaned from the above text is that al-Siyālkūtī draws on a flourishing tradition of philosophical *kalām* and theology that emerges after al-Rāzī. The glosses on *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* reveal a significantly larger philosophical and theological world in which the authors were engaged, including al-Jurjānī, who comments on other philosophical works. The application of the problem of *ja' l* to divine knowledge seems to be a novel concern. More broadly, the problem of *ja' l* is articulated here with reference to the schools of thought on existence and essence, e.g. *'ayniyyat al-wujūd* versus *ziyādat al-wujūd*, to which I return shortly. Here, the problem seems to be given a new lease on life in the later philosophical and theological tradition. The concept seems to gain prominence in the context of theological questions, in contrast to the conceptual analysis it is given in post-Rāzian works of *kalām*. Al-Siyālkūtī refers above to Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. c. 908/1502), who becomes an important figure in the later tradition of *kalām* and philosophy.⁸⁸ In his *Risālat al-Zawrā'*, a treatise which expounds Akbarian views of cosmology, al-Dawānī begins with the following,

T15

Introduction

The cause of a thing in reality is that which is the source of the identity (*nafs*) of that thing, for what is [simply] a cause of the manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) of it, for example, is not its cause in reality, but rather one of its attributes (*awṣāf*), which is clear. And that essences are not caused (*maj'ūl*), in the sense, for example, that "human being human" is not in need of an agent, does not negate what we have stated. Because what we mean by [the above] is that [essences] are in themselves effects of an agent and after that there is no need of another causing (*ta'thīr ākhar*) for [the essences] to remain themselves. And negating a posterior need (*al-iḥtiyāj al-lāhiq*) does not negate a prior need (*al-iḥtiyāj al-sābiq*), so consider this well.⁸⁹

88 On al-Dawānī, see Pourjavady, "Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī", 415–37.

89 Al-Dawānī, *Risālat al-Zawrā'*, fol. 2a.

From this opening statement on *jaʿl* and essences, which broadly falls in line with the views of our Ashʿarite authors on the topic, al-Dawānī launches into a much more radical discussion of Akbarian metaphysics, which aims to subvert the concepts of “formal philosophy” (*al-ḥikma al-rasmīyya*), including essential generation, the substance-accident distinction, form, and mental versus extra-mental reality. He states that effects are purely mind-dependent (*iʿtibārī*) and non-existent in themselves: “The effect is, then, nothing but purely mind-dependent (*iʿtibārīyyan maḥḍan*)... if it is viewed as an independent entity, it is non-existent, indeed impossible.”⁹⁰ Indeed, al-Dawānī subverts the very distinction between substance and accident:

You might ask how an accident in itself (*bi-ʿaynihi*) can be a substance and how can an idea (*maʿnā*) be body and the case is that real things (*al-ḥaqāʾiq*) differ with respect to their essences. We say that we have indicated to you that the real (*al-ḥaqīqa*) is other than the form (*al-ṣūra*). [The real] is in itself ... denuded of all forms through which it is [only] manifested, but it appears at times in one form and in another time another form.⁹¹

Here, it seems that al-Dawānī draws on Akbarian metaphysics to undermine established distinctions in formal philosophy. I must set aside any systematic analysis of al-Dawānī’s views. However, it is evident that later thinkers merge problems from the various traditions and schools of thought. Their views on *jaʿl* are interpreted with an eye to a variety of approaches including the Illuminationists, Akbarians, Peripatetics, and Ashʿarites. *Jaʿl* seems to gain currency in this context, while it seems to lose philosophical significance in *kalām*.⁹² The later schools of thought mentioned above will be central to the final thinker we examine, Mullā Ṣadrā (d. c. 1050/1640), whose discussion of *jaʿl* aptly captures the theological currency of the concept in the later tradition.

90 Al-Dawānī, *Risālat al-Zawrāʾ*, fol. 2b.

91 Al-Dawānī, *Risālat al-Zawrāʾ*, fol. 8a.

92 Further inquiry is needed with regard to *kalām* works, commentaries, and treatises on the topic. *Jaʿl* certainly had potential to play a more creative and systematic role in *kalām*’s philosophical approach to mereology. For example, questions about necessary properties and parts could be released from the longer exegetical tradition of the Aristotelian corpus. However, the indication of our authors is that it was a dead end.

3 Mullā Ṣadrā and *Ja'ī*

Mullā Ṣadrā provides an extensive treatment of *jā'ī* in his general concepts section of the *Asfār*.⁹³ I cannot provide a systematic reading of his approach here. Rather, I will highlight some central problems. It is notable that despite the growing complexity of problems, Mullā Ṣadrā devotes a chapter of the *Asfār* to the question and refers approvingly to al-Rāzī's discussion, stating, "al-Imām al-Rāzī was correct where he states that the position of essences as being uncaused is a corollary (*min furū'*) of the question of the absolute essence and that it is in itself neither existent nor non-existent."⁹⁴ As we will see, Mullā Ṣadrā will appropriate this point to a very different end. Here, I focus on his discussion of the concept in the shorter work, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, where he devotes the seventh tome (*mash'ar*) of the introduction to the question. The section is entitled, "That the caused (*maj'ūl*) thing in itself by the agent—and the emanated thing from the cause—is existence and not essence" (*Fī anna l-amr al-maj'ūl bi-l-dhāt min al-jā'īl wa-l-fā'iḍ min al-'illa huwa l-wujūd dūna l-māhiyya*).⁹⁵ As the title suggests, the problem of *ja'ī* for Mullā Ṣadrā will address a central concern of his over the nature of existence and its relation to essence, which falls within a longer history of opposing views on the concreteness or superaddedness of existence, as highlighted in T14.⁹⁶ However, Mullā Ṣadrā treats an even broader spectrum of philosophical views, as his introduction to the problem suggests:

T16

We state: the *maj'ūl* in itself is not what [they] call [A] the essence, as the followers of the Illuminationists (*al-rīwāqīyyīn*; lit.: Stoics), like the Martyred Master [i.e., al-Suhrawardī] and those who follow him, and included amongst them [i.e., those who hold the position that essence is *maj'ūl*] is the Master al-Dawānī and those who follow his approach.

Nor [B] is [the *maj'ūl*] the "essence becoming existent" (*ṣayrūrat al-māhiyya mawjūda*), as is generally held by the Peripatetics. Nor [C] is [the *maj'ūl*] the concept of the existent qua existent, as the Exacting Sayyid [i.e., Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī] views it to be.

Rather [D] the produced thing [*al-ṣādīr*] in itself and the *maj'ūl* in itself, with respect to all things that possess a *jā'īl*, is in virtue of its concrete

93 See Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:375–98. See Bonmariage, "Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī", 466–87.

94 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, 1:397.

95 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, 120.

96 See Bonmariage, "Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī", 471–73.

existence (*wujūduhu al-ʿaynī*) in terms of a simple *jaʿl* exalted (*muqaddasan*) of a plurality that requires a *majʿūl* and *majʿūl ilayhi* [i.e., a subject and agent of *jaʿl*]. Because if the essence with respect to its substance is in need of a *jāʿil*, this entails the essence being constituted of the *jāʿil* with respect to itself and its meaning, such that the *jāʿil* will be considered a part of the constitution of its essence such that it cannot be conceived without it. And such is not the case.⁹⁷

In the context of a proliferation of systematic views on essence and existence, *jaʿl* seems to provide a general framework to discuss fundamental differences with respect to the relation of existence to essence, which, in turn, relates to a spectrum of metaphysical and theological positions. It is notable that al-Dawānī is associated with his own school of thought, distinct from that of the Illuminationists and the Peripatetics. He attributes to al-Dawānī the position that the essence is caused. The position differs from al-Dawānī's view, as expressed in the *Zawraʾ* above, where he states that the essence is not caused, but then provides an Akbarian analysis of how effects are to be properly viewed as manifestations of a singular existence. Al-Dawānī might have held varying positions on the topic throughout his life; as well, his commentary on al-Suhrawardī's *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* could be a source for why he is associated with the first position, i.e. the primacy or causedness of the essence.

It is notable that Mullā Ṣadrā's treatment of *jaʿl* in the *Mashāʿir*, as well as in the *Asfār*, is extensive. In contrast to post-Rāzian *mutakallimūn*, Mullā Ṣadrā finds the concept philosophically significant. Returning to Mullā Ṣadrā's own view on *jaʿl*, I highlight a point raised in the *Mashāʿir* that links the problem to his overarching ontology:

L14

The relation between the created *majʿūl* to the *jāʿil* is the relation of deficiency to perfection, and weakness to power, for [the reasons] you have come to know that [A] that which occurs in the concrete and existent thing in reality is nothing but *the instances of existence not essences* and it is established that existence is a simple reality [*ḥaqīqa basīṭa*] which possesses neither genus, nor constitutive differentia, nor species, nor dividing differentia, nor individuation. Rather, its individuation is in virtue of its simple essence and that differentiation in essence between individuals and instances is only in terms of degrees of strength and weakness.⁹⁸

97 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashāʿir*, 120.

98 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashāʿir*, 124–25.

In this passage, Mullā Ṣadrā connects *ja'l* directly to the question of “primacy of existence” (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) and his monistic ontology. Even more, the problem relates to his fundamental cosmology of “substantial motion” (*al-ḥaraka al-jawhariyya*) and the gradation (*tashkīk*) of existents.⁹⁹ Here, it seems essences are not caused because there are no fundamental categories of essences or substances in his monistic ontology.

Mullā Ṣadrā's texts indicate the extent to which the topic of *ja'l* transforms from its more modest discussion in al-Rāzī's *Mabāḥith* and *Mulakhkhaṣ*. With respect to its philosophical significance, *ja'l* seems to undergo an ebb and flow over the long stretch of the post-classical tradition. The above is simply a sketch of central themes related to concept of *ja'l*. The topic deserves a fuller treatment with a focus on the specific philosophical contexts, thinkers, and schools of thought. Though it seems to offer a promising rubric for non-Aristotelian or non-Avicennan thinkers to analyze, inter alia, parts-to-whole relations, the post-classical *mutakallimūn* we have encountered seem skeptical of its philosophical value. Still, the *kalām* texts examined above develop novel discussions of simples and composites in the context of questions related to *ja'l*. These approaches seem to move beyond the classical positions on *kalām* atomism and *falsafa* hylomorphism. The question of whether the notion of *ja'l*—and related discussions—inspired novel and systematic approaches to mereology in works of *kalām* is of particular interest for history of the post-classical tradition and requires further investigation.

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99 On Mullā Ṣadrā's ontology, see Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*; Rizvi, *Mulla Sadra and Metaphysics*.

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Early Mamlūk Ash‘arism against Ibn Taymiyya on the Nonliteral Reinterpretation (*ta’wīl*) of God’s Attributes

Jon Hoover

1 Introduction

Modern research on theological production in the early Mamlūk sultanate of Egypt and Syria has focused primarily on the prolific Ḥanbalī theologians Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350).¹ This does not mean, however, that they were generally representative of early Mamlūk theological discourse. On the contrary, they expressed highly controversial views that others sought to marginalize and quell, even by state sanction. In 698/1298 religious scholars in Damascus charged Ibn Taymiyya with ascribing bodily characteristics to God in his *al-Ḥamawīyya al-kubrā*,² a fatwa that he had written for the people of Ḥamāh.³ Ibn Taymiyya emerged victorious over his detractors, but the charge of corporealism (*tajsīm*) in God’s attributes emerged again in 705/1306 when the Mamlūk viceroy in Damascus subjected him to three hearings before the leading religious scholars of the day. These hearings were inconclusive, and Ibn Taymiyya was thus summoned to the Mamlūk capital Cairo soon thereafter for a hearing that convicted him of corporealism and other doctrines deemed reprehensible. He was imprisoned and subjected to further hearings in Egypt before returning to Damascus in 712/1313.⁴ More than three decades later, in the late 740s/1340s, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya also came under attack for Taymiyyan views on God’s attributes and other

1 Recent monographs and edited volumes discussing the theologies of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya include Suleiman, *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes*; Vasalou, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theological Ethics*; Krawietz and Tamer, *Islamic Theology*; Anjum, *Politics*; Bori and Holtzman, *A Scholar in the Shadow*; Rapoport and Ahmed, *Ibn Taymiyya*; and Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy*. Also noteworthy are the many studies by Yahya Michot, among them, *Ibn Taymiyya*, and “A Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary”. Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, provides a survey of Ibn Taymiyya’s theology in chapters 3, 7, and 8.

2 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, in *Majmū’ fatāwā* (hereafter abbreviated MF), 5:5–120.

3 Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 15:613 (year 698).

4 For accounts of these trials, see Murad, “Ibn Taymiyya on Trial”, 3, 6–21, and Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 24–29. For Ibn Taymiyya’s own account of the Damascus trials, see Jackson, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial”.

theological matters from the Shāfiʿī Chief Judge of Damascus Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355).⁵

It is apparent from the writings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and accounts of their trials that their primary opponents were generally Ashʿarī in theology. However, the thought of these opponents has not been examined from their own writings, and, apart from Louis Pouzet's brief survey of intellectual currents in his study of thirteenth century Damascene religious institutions,⁶ very little is known about Ashʿarism under the early Mamlūks.⁷ It goes beyond the scope of this study to attempt a comprehensive survey of Ashʿarism in the early Mamlūk sultanate. Instead, it will examine how four contemporary opponents of Ibn Taymiyya responded to the issue at the core of his *Ḥamawīyya*: the interpretation of texts such as "The All-Merciful sat on the Throne" (Q. 20:5) that suggest corporeal and spatial attributes for God.

The four Mamlūk scholars to be examined are Ibn Jahbal al-Kilābī (d. 733/1333), Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Hindī (d. 715/1315–16), Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a (d. 733/1333), and Shams al-Dīn al-Sarūjī (d. 710/1310).⁸ The study will first outline the argument of Ibn Taymiyya's *Ḥamawīyya* and then analyze each of the four figures in turn. This will show that even though only al-Hindī was known primarily as an Ashʿarī theologian, all four scholars worked within the sphere of what may be called the Ashʿarī *tafwīd-taʿwīl* hermeneutic. This hermeneutic is based on the fundamental conviction that reason requires freeing God of any meaning (*ma'nā*) in revealed texts connoting corporeal or spatial qualities. Once this is established, the hermeneutic posits two options. The first, often called the way of the early Muslims, the *salaf*, is to refrain from further interpretation and delegate the meaning to God (*tafwīd*). The second option, sometimes called the way of the later scholars, the *khalaf*, is to reinterpret the text nonliterally (*taʿwīl*) to mean something other than its plain sense (*ẓāhir*) or literal sense (*ḥaqīqa*). Common examples of *taʿwīl* include rendering God's sitting (*istiwā'*) on the Throne as God's possessing (*istilā'*) and God's hand as His power (*qudra*). Elements of this *tafwīd-taʿwīl* hermeneutic are found in

5 Bori and Holtzman, *A Scholar in the Shadow*, 22–26; Holtzman, "Accused".

6 Pouzet, *Damas*, 199–205.

7 Important exceptions are Makdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites", 57–78 (in Part I, 1962), which discusses Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) as an apologist for Ashʿarism in his *Ṭabaqāt*, and Holtzman, "Dhimmi's Question", which provides insight on theological discourse in early 8th/14th century Cairo. See also Bori, "Theology", 62–65, for a useful review of research on theology in the early Mamlūk sultanate.

8 Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī is not considered here because he launched his attack against Ibn Taymiyya's views on God's attributes after the latter had died; al-Subkī's immediate opponent on these matters was Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.

the works of eleventh century Ash'arīs such as Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015–16)⁹ and al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072),¹⁰ but it received clear and influential, if somewhat different, expressions in al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and then enjoyed wide currency among late medieval and early-modern Ash'arīs.¹¹ As will become apparent, each of the four Mamlūk scholars studied here takes a slightly different approach to *ta'wīl*, and this shows that early Mamlūk Ash'arism was by no means uniform. It will also become clear in the course of this study that Ibn Taymiyya and his opponents adopt fundamentally different hermeneutical strategies for reading the texts of revelation as they attempt to safeguard God's distinction from the created world.

2 Ibn Taymiyya's *Ḥamawīyya*

The target of Ibn Taymiyya's polemic in *Ḥamawīyya* is most evidently the version of the *tafwīd-ta'wīl* hermeneutic found in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. After furnishing rational proofs against divine corporeality and location (*jīha*), al-Rāzī states in his *kalām* manual *al-Muḥaṣṣal*: "Either knowledge of [the plain senses of the texts] is delegated to God (*tafwīd*), according to the doctrine of the *salaf* ... or [the plain senses] are reinterpreted (*ta'wīl*) perspicuously, according to the doctrine of most of the *kalām* theologians".¹² Similarly, in his extensive refutation of corporealism *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs*, al-Rāzī calls revealed texts suggesting corporeal or spatial attributes in God indeterminate (*mutashābih*) and outlines the two options of *tafwīd* and *ta'wīl* to deal with them, his own practice being that of *ta'wīl*. In *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs*, he also expresses considerable

9 Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb mushkil*.

10 Nguyen, *Sufi Master*, 220–36.

11 The formulations of al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī will be elaborated below. For a number of prominent examples of the *tafwīd-ta'wīl* hermeneutic in the generations following Ibn Taymiyya, see El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Ḥajar Al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr Al-Dīn Al-Ālūsī (d. 1899)", 275–78; and Heer, "The Priority of Reason," 181–83. Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arites", is incorrect to suggest that Ash'arism failed to infiltrate the traditionalist-dominated law schools—the Shāfi'ī law school in particular—because it did not exclude *ta'wīl* from its methodology. The recent study of Spevack, *The Archetypal Sunni Scholar*, 53–57, sets Makdisi's proposal firmly aside by showing the dominance of Ash'arī and Māturīdī *kalām* in the educational institutions of late medieval and early modern Sunni Islam. However, Makdisi's work does provide the raw material to suggest that the two-pronged Ash'arī hermeneutic of ascribing *tafwīd* to the *salaf* and *ta'wīl* to the *khalaf* was formulated to accommodate both traditionalist and Ash'arī *kalām* voices within the Shāfi'ī law school.

12 al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 158.

scepticism toward the epistemological value of transmitted texts, and he effectively demotes the Qurʾān from the level of knowledge (*ʿilm*) to probability (*ẓann*). Only rational proofs can provide definitive knowledge.¹³

Ibn Taymiyya dedicates the first part of his *Ḥamawīyya* to overturning this Rāzian hierarchy of knowledge: the *salaf* certainly do know the meanings of the divine attributes, and they do not merely delegate them to God. Ibn Taymiyya lambasts advocates of the *tafwīd-taʿwīl* hermeneutic for following the ways of unbelief, propounding specious arguments against the divine attributes indicated by the texts, and falling into confusion over what the attributes mean. Faced with this confusion, they either call for belief in the verbal form (*lafẓ*) while delegating the meaning to God—what they call the way of the *salaf*—or they divert the meaning from its plain and literal sense to a variety of nonliteral senses (*majāz*)—the way of the *khalaf*. For Ibn Taymiyya, the result is nothing but a mix of corrupt reasoning and unbelief in the revelation, which makes the *salaf* out to be ignorant of the divine attributes and the *khalaf* more knowledgeable. The *salaf* are rendered ignorant because they believe only in the verbal forms but know nothing of their meanings, while the *khalaf* are thought to be more knowledgeable because they allegedly know both the meanings and the reinterpretations toward which they must be diverted.¹⁴ Ibn Taymiyya considers it absurd that the *kalām* theologians of later Muslim generations should know more than the *salaf*. It is not possible that the Qurʾān provide no guidance about God's attributes, that the Prophet fail to teach the truth about them, and that the early generations of Muslims not know what they mean, especially as humans are naturally disposed to seek out knowledge of their object of worship.¹⁵

In *Ḥamawīyya* Ibn Taymiyya not only criticizes the epistemology of the Rāzian version of the *tafwīd-taʿwīl* hermeneutic. He also impugns the genealogy of its *taʿwīl* as pagan. He traces the reinterpretations (*taʿwīlāt*) prominent in his day back to the Murjiʿī and Ḥanafī scholar Bishr al-Marīsī (d. 218/833), and he observes that these reinterpretations are found in al-Rāzī's

13 al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, 219–34. For further discussion of al-Rāzī's *taʿwīl*, see Heer, "The Priority of Reason", 183–85; and Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 54–83, who, while acknowledging earlier Ashʿarī deployment of *taʿwīl* in al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī, overemphasizes the originality of al-Rāzī's approach within Ashʿarism. Al-Rāzī's demotion of revelation to probability is not absolute as he elsewhere allows that transmitted texts may yield knowledge if conjoined with contextual factors established by recurrent (*mutawātīr*) reports; see al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, 2:251–54, which is translated in Hoover, "Reason and the Proof Value of Revelation", 385–87.

14 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:9–10, 32–34.

15 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:7–8, 11–12, 17–19.

Taʿsīs al-taqdīs and the *Kitāb al-taʿwīlāt*¹⁶ of the Ashʿarī theologian Ibn Fūrak, as well as in the works of al-Ghazālī, the Ḥanbalī Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119), and the Muʿtazilīs Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbārī (d. 303/915–16), ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024), and Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044). Ibn Taymiyya further roots *taʿwīl* in Jaʿd b. Dirham (d. 124/742 or 125/743) and Jahm b. Ṣafwān's (d. 128/746) stripping God of His attributes, and he says that Jaʿd was the first to deny that God was on the Throne and to affirm that God's sitting meant possessing. Ibn Taymiyya then locates the sources of Jaʿd's views in the Jews, the polytheists, and philosophers among the Ṣābiʿa of Ḥarrān and he traces the source of Jahm's doctrine to "the Sumaniyya, some of the philosophers of India", whom the Islamic tradition sometimes identifies with Buddhists.¹⁷

To counter this genealogy of error, Ibn Taymiyya in *Ḥamawīyya* seeks to establish a broad foundation of traditional authority for his own position by providing a long list of sources reporting authentic views of the *salaf*. Among these are, to name but a few, the *Ibāna* of Ibn Baṭṭa (d. 387/997),¹⁸ the *Sunna* of Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923),¹⁹ the *Sunna* of ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 290/903),²⁰ and *al-Radd ʿalā l-Jahmiyya* by ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī (d. 280–82/893–95).²¹ Ibn Taymiyya also devotes much of the middle part of *Ḥamawīyya* to quotations from some of these sources, as well as from classical Ashʿarī texts that he takes to come close to his own view. This is to claim the school eponym al-Ashʿarī for the *salaf* and undermine the Ashʿarī authenticity of the *tafwīḍ-taʿwīl* hermeneutic, a strategy that Ibn Taymiyya also employs elsewhere in his writings.²² To achieve his purpose Ibn Taymiyya quotes sections from al-Ashʿarī's creed found in his heresiography *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* and portions of his *kalām* manual *al-Ibāna* affirming that God indeed sits on His Throne and has hands and eyes, without how (*bi-lā kayf*).²³ (I will examine Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of *bi-lā kayf* below.) He also cites al-Ashʿarī in the *Ibāna* polemicizing against the Muʿtazilīs for reinterpreting God's sitting and for stating that God is in every place. If God were in every place, al-Ashʿarī

16 Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb mushkil*.

17 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:20–22 (quote 22).

18 Laoust, *La profession de foi d'Ibn Baṭṭa*, which includes a study, edition and translation of Ibn Baṭṭa's *al-Ibāna al-ṣaḡhīra*.

19 al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*.

20 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-sunna*.

21 al-Dārimī, *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā l-Jahmiyya*; Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:24–25.

22 el Omari, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna'"; Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial", 52–53, 81–82.

23 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:90–92, quotes selections from al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 211 and 290–97. Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:93–95, quotes selections from al-Ashʿarī, *al-Ibāna*, 7–8, and elsewhere.

contends, then He would be sitting even on filth.²⁴ Ibn Taymiyya quotes similar arguments from al-Bāqillānī's (d. 403/1013) *Kitāb al-Ibāna*, which is not known to be extant. He mentions that al-Bāqillānī's *Kitāb al-Tamhīd* contains even more arguments, but he says that he did not have the book immediately at hand.²⁵ To top off his appropriation of classical Ash'arī authorities, Ibn Taymiyya quotes a passage on God's attributes from the *Nizāmiyya* creed of Abū l-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). In contrast to al-Juwaynī's extensive re-interpretation of divine attributes in his *Irshād*,²⁶ he in the *Nizāmiyya* strongly discourages *ta'wīl* and favours the way of the *salaf*, which he defines as "referring the plain senses back to their sources and delegating their meanings to the Lord" (*ijrā' al-zawāhir 'alā mawāridihā wa-tafwīḍ ma'ānīhā ilā l-Rabb*).²⁷ Ibn Taymiyya provides little comment on these sundry texts, and he apparently quotes al-Juwaynī merely to add another Ash'arī theologian to his list of Ash'arī *ta'wīl* critics. Otherwise, al-Juwaynī's view of the *salaf* in the *Nizāmiyya* seems to be that of the *tafwīḍ* found in the *tafwīḍ-ta'wīl* hermeneutic.²⁸ Probably with this in mind, Ibn Taymiyya comments dryly that those whom he is quoting do not necessarily conform to his own views, whether on this subject or otherwise, but that one should accept truth wherever it is found, even from an unbeliever.²⁹

The doctrine of the *salaf* that Ibn Taymiyya derives from his traditionalist sources consists in describing God as He describes Himself and as His Messenger describes Him, neither stripping the attributes away (*ta'wīl*) in the fashion of the *kalām* theologians, nor likening (*tamthīl*) them to the attributes of creatures because there is nothing like God (Q. 42:11).³⁰ For Ibn Taymiyya, this means that the *salaf* knew the meanings of God's attributes reported in revelation. However, certain formulaic statements attributed to them do not appear to support his position unequivocally. Ibn Taymiyya notes that al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), and others said concerning the attributes, "Let them pass by as they came", and "Let them pass by as they came, without how". He explains that letting the attributes pass by (*imrār*) means

24 Ibn Taymiyya, *Hamawīyya*, MF 5:95–97, quotes selections from al-Ash'arī, *Ibāna*, 42–44.

25 Ibn Taymiyya, *Hamawīyya*, MF 5:98–99.

26 al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, 22, 67–70; trans., al-Juwaynī, *Guide to Conclusive Proofs*, 25, 86–91.

27 Ibn Taymiyya, *Hamawīyya*, MF 5:101; al-Juwaynī, *al-'Aqida al-nizāmiyya*, 32.

28 For analysis of the view of al-Ash'arī, see Gimaret, *La doctrine*, 323–28. Allard, *Le problème*, 407, summarizes the views of al-Ash'arī, al-Bāqillānī, and al-Juwaynī on anthropomorphic language about God after examining their respective texts individually earlier in the monograph.

29 Ibn Taymiyya, *Hamawīyya*, MF 5:101–2.

30 Ibn Taymiyya, *Hamawīyya*, MF 5:26–28.

leaving them intact and not stripping away their meanings, while affirming the attributes “without how” or “without modality” (*bi-lā kayf*) means not assimilating them to the attributes of creatures. With this, Ibn Taymiyya holds affirmation of the meanings of God’s attributes together with denial of their likeness to creatures in a double perspective by drawing a distinction between the known meanings of the attributes and their inscrutable modalities.

One might think that the statements of al-Awzā’ī and al-Thawrī instead support total abstention from thinking about the meanings of God’s attributes or perhaps the *tafwīd* of the Ash‘arī *tafwīd-ta’wīl* hermeneutic. In the latter case, “Let them pass by as they came”, would mean delegating the attributes’ meanings to God after freeing Him of corporeal and spatial characteristics. Ibn Taymiyya gives no attention to these possibilities in *Ḥamawīyya* but counters with a statement attributed to Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796) about God’s sitting: “The sitting is not a matter of ignorance (*ghayr majhūl*); the modality is not accessible to reason (*ghayr ma’qūl*); and belief in it is obligatory”.³¹ From this, Ibn Taymiyya concludes that knowledge of only the modality of the sitting is denied, not knowledge of the sitting itself. For if knowledge of the meaning of the attributes were denied entirely, Mālik would not have needed to specify that it was only the modality that was not accessible to reason. By the same token, if the statement, “Let them pass by as they came”, were intended to deny the meanings of the verbal forms of the attributes, then it would have to read, “Let its verbal form pass by, firmly believing that what is understood from it is not meant”.³² For Ibn Taymiyya, then, the admonition of the *salaf* to let the attributes pass by in no way precludes human knowledge of the meanings of God’s attributes. Only the modality of the attributes cannot be known.

Ibn Taymiyya does not clarify how modality (*kayfiyya*) and meaning (*ma’nā*) relate to each other semantically. Rather, he deploys the two terms in tandem to maintain the seemingly paradoxical conviction that God is completely different and beyond human experience on the one hand while God’s attributes do signify something real and meaningful in human language on the other. In denying knowledge of the *kayfiyya* and affirming knowledge of the *ma’nā*, Ibn Taymiyya does not resolve the paradox, nor even acknowledge it, but simply holds its two sides together in the conviction that this is the most faithful and rational set of beliefs. This double perspective parallels his denial of assimilation (*tashbih*) of God’s attributes to those of creatures on the one hand and his rejection of stripping away (*ta’tīl*) God’s attributes on the other.

31 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:41.

32 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:39–42 (quotation on 42).

Beyond defending the *salaf's* knowledge of the meanings of God's attributes, Ibn Taymiyya's core claim in *Ḥamawīyya* is that God is above (*fawq*) and over (*'alā*) all things. He asserts that the revelation is very clear and the position of the *salaf* consistent. The Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* are full of unambiguous (*naṣṣ*) and plain (*ẓāhir*) texts indicating that "[God] is above everything and over everything, that He is above the Throne, and that He is above the sky".³³ Among the proof-texts that Ibn Taymiyya quotes are, "To Him ascend fair words, and righteous deeds lift them up" (Q. 35:10), "The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him" (Q. 70:4), "They fear their Lord above them" (Q. 16:50), "The All-Merciful sat on the Throne" (Q. 20:5), "Then, He sat on the Throne", which Ibn Taymiyya says occurs six times in the Qur'ān (Q. 7:54, 10:3, 13:3, 25:59, 32:4, 57:4), and the so-called *ḥadīth* of the mountain goats (*aw'āl*), "The Throne is above that. God is above His Throne, and He knows what you are doing".³⁴ Such texts are so numerous, Ibn Taymiyya explains, that they yield certain knowledge (*'ilm yaqīn*), and, moreover, no one among the early generations of Muslims opposes them.³⁵

Ibn Taymiyya's assertion of certain knowledge that God is above the Throne and the sky flies squarely in the face of the Ash'arī claim that reason precludes this. In *Ḥamawīyya*, Ibn Taymiyya says only that the rational foundations of the *tafwīd-ta'wīl* hermeneutic are specious and corrupt,³⁶ but he does not confront the Ash'arī arguments. He takes up that task several years later in *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya*, a refutation of al-Rāzī's *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs* compiled in Egypt in the year leading up to Ramaḍān 706/March-April 1307 when he mentions his book in a letter written from prison.³⁷ What Ibn Taymiyya does do in *Ḥamawīyya*,

33 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:12.

34 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:12–14. One version of the *ḥadīth* of the mountain goats is found in al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi'*, 5:348–49 (Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, Wa-min sūrat al-Ḥāqqa, 3320).

35 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:15–16.

36 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:9–10, 18. Ibn Taymiyya also writes, "We have tradition-based and reason-based proofs, which space does not allow mentioning. I know that the *kalām* theologians who negate [God's attributes] have specious arguments that exist, but it is not possible to mention them in a fatwa. Whoever examines them and wants to elucidate the specious arguments that they mention will find it an easy matter" (*Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:25).

37 Al-Hunaydī, the editor of Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya*, narrows the date of writing to between 26 Ramaḍān 705 and 23 Rabī' al-awwal 707, that is, between April 1306 and September 1307 (9 22–25). The *terminus ad quem* can in fact be pushed back several months earlier since Ibn Taymiyya refers to *Bayān talbīs* in his letter responding to a message that he received in prison in Ramaḍān 706/March-April 1307: "I wrote about [issues relating to God's sitting on the Throne] in what comes to several volumes, and in them I mentioned the views of all the sects and their revelation-based and reason-based arguments. I dealt exhaustively with what al-Rāzī mentioned in the book *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs*, the *Nihāyat al-uqūl*, and other than those, to the point that I mentioned the doctrines of the

however, is further clarify his understanding of God’s attributes from the double perspective of denying knowledge of the *kayfiyya* and affirming knowledge of the *ma’nā*.

From the perspective of denying knowledge of the *kayfiyya*, Ibn Taymiyya aims to understand all of God’s attributes only in ways that befit God’s majesty, whether they be attributes like God’s face and hand, which imply corporeality, or attributes like God’s power and knowledge, which do not. For Ibn Taymiyya it does not matter whether the sundry attributes suggest corporeality or not. Just as the modality of God’s essence is not known, so also the modalities of all of God’s attributes are not known. None of God’s attributes belongs to the genus (*jins*) of creaturely attributes, which are either accidents subsisting in substances such as knowledge, power, mercy and anger, or bodies such as the face and hands. Instead, all of God’s attributes are *sui generis*, and it is wrong to understand God’s attributes in ways common to creatures.³⁸ The same applies to God being above His Throne: “God sits on His Throne with a sitting that befits His majesty”.³⁹ Ibn Taymiyya here indirectly denies substance, accident, and body of God. In later works, however, he is more nuanced and notes that the *salaf* neither affirm nor deny such terms of God because they were innovated and not found in revelation.⁴⁰

Ibn Taymiyya’s interpretive approach from the perspective of denying knowledge of the *kayfiyya* looks much like the *tafwīd* that the Ash‘arī *tafwīd-ta’wīl* hermeneutic ascribes to the *salaf*. God’s attributes do not involve creaturely and bodily characteristics in any fashion, and human understanding of these attributes is consigned to God’s majesty. However, to compare this to Ash‘arī *tafwīd* is to see only one side of Ibn Taymiyya’s hermeneutical double perspective. The other side seeks to establish knowledge of the *ma’nā* of the attributes through linguistic analysis and a pragmatic, contextual approach to meaning.⁴¹

From the perspective of affirming knowledge of the *ma’nā*, Ibn Taymiyya addresses the question of how to interpret God’s withness (*ma’iyya*) in the Qur’ānic verse, “[God] is with you wherever you are” (Q. 57:4), while affirming also that God is above the Throne. Ibn Taymiyya asserts that both are to be

peripatetic philosophers, the followers of Aristotle ...” (*Jawāb warāqa ... Ramaḍān* 706, MF 3:226–27). Yahya Michot dates Ibn Taymiyya’s letter to the period Shawwāl–early Dhū al-Ḥijja 706/April–early June 1307 in “Textes spirituels d’Ibn Taymiyya. IX”, 10–11 n. 7. For a description of Ibn Taymiyya’s letter, see Laoust, *La profession de foi d’Ibn Taymiyya*, 26–29.

38 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:113–16.

39 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:28, see also 5:117.

40 See for example Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb al-I’tirādāt*, 152; Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya*, 8:540–41.

41 For explanation of this, see Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 87–140.

taken in their real senses, that is, literally—"God is with us literally (*ḥaḳīqatan*), and He is above the Throne literally"—and he supports this by quoting again the *ḥadīth* of the mountain goats, "God is above the Throne, and He knows what you are doing".⁴² To *kalām* theologians, God cannot be with us at the same time that He is above the Throne, and this obviously illustrates the need for *ta'wīl*. Ibn Taymiyya sees no contradiction. Rather, he explains, "with" (*ma'*) simply means conjunction (*muqārana*) in general. It need not imply contiguity (*mumāssa*) or spatial proximity (*muḥādhāh*). He notes, moreover, that the *salaf* said that God was with us in His knowledge, which, given the Qur'ānic context is clearly what is meant by "with" in the verse, "God is with you wherever you are". God's being with or conjoined to us is simply a matter of God knowing our affairs. It is not His spatial proximity. This then for Ibn Taymiyya is the plain and literal sense of the text. It is thus inappropriate to follow *kalām* theologians in first thinking about God in a creaturely fashion and then diverting "with" from an allegedly plain and literal sense of spatial proximity to some other nonliteral sense.⁴³

Elaborating further in *Ḥamawīyya*, Ibn Taymiyya clarifies that this kind of linguistic analysis is a matter of explicating what is permissible and possible to say about God. It is not a matter of assimilating God to creatures. Moreover, he invokes the Qur'ānic verse, "To God is the highest similitude" (Q. 16:60), which he takes as inspiration in later works for a theological method of freeing God of all imperfections and ascribing all perfections to Him, where the fullest perfection is to be unlike creatures.⁴⁴ This returns Ibn Taymiyya's discourse from the perspective of affirming knowledge of the *ma'nā* back to the perspective of denying knowledge of the *kayfiyya*. Denying assimilationism and knowledge of the *kayfiyya* serves as a check to remind readers that the God who is affirmed in the linguistic world of *ma'nā* is totally unique and other.

3 Ibn Jahbal al-Kilābī (d. 733/1333)

The Damascene Shāfi'ī scholar Ibn Jahbal al-Kilābī penned a direct refutation of Ibn Taymiyya's *Ḥamawīyya*, which is copied into Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī's *Ṭabaqāt*

42 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:103.

43 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:102–4.

44 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:107. See also Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 55–56 (a fuller description of the arguments in *Ḥamawīyya* MF 5:102–107) and 56–67 (exposition of Ibn Taymiyya's theological method based on ascribing the highest similitude to God).

al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā.⁴⁵ Al-Subkī does not identify Ibn Jahbal as an Ashʿarī explicitly, nor do other biographical sources. However, as will become clear, Ibn Jahbal's treatise takes inspiration from al-Ghazālī and lies firmly within the Ashʿarī *tafwīd-taʿwīl* hermeneutic that divests God of corporeal and spatial attributes. The treatise does not bear a title, but I will call it *Jiha* after the Arabic word for "location" appearing in al-Subkī's introductory sentence: "I happened upon a composition of his that he composed denying location (*jiha*) in refutation of Ibn Taymiyya".⁴⁶ It seems likely that Ibn Jahbal wrote *Jiha* soon after controversy over Ibn Taymiyya's *Ḥamawīyya* erupted in 698/1298. He explains his occasion for writing as follows:

What called for writing down this tract is what occurred recently (*fi hādhihi al-mudda*). Someone jotted down something affirming location [for God], and whoever does not have a firm foothold in learning is deceived by it ... So, I thought it best to mention the creed of the People of the Sunna and the Community and then elucidate the corruption of what he mentioned ... Then, I provided proofs for the creed of the People of the Sunna and what is linked to that.⁴⁷

Ibn Jahbal's treatise is full of contempt for Ibn Taymiyya, and he never deigns to address the Ḥanbali theologian directly by name. Instead, Ibn Jahbal calls Ibn Taymiyya "he" or addresses him directly as "you". He also labels him a turncoat (*māriq*),⁴⁸ someone deluded (*maghrūr*),⁴⁹ and an imposter (*muddaʿin*).⁵⁰ Moreover, he counts him among the Ḥashwiyya,⁵¹ and he is particularly disturbed that some Ḥashwiyya—like Ibn Taymiyya—should identify their views

45 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:34–91 (biography of Ibn Jahbal), 9:35–91 (refutation of Ibn Taymiyya hereafter referred to as Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*). *Jiha* is printed separately as Ibn Jahbal al-Ḥalabī, *Ḥaqāʾiq*. The English translation Ibn Jahbal al-Kilābī, *Refutation*, is keyed to the pagination in al-Subkī. Ibn Jahbal's full name is Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Ismāʿīl Ibn Jahbal al-Kilābī, and other biographies of him include al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān*, 1:530–31; al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 8:252; al-Dhahabī, *Ibar*, 4:96; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Durar*, 1:329; Ibn ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 8:82–83; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 16:253. Ibn Kathīr gives Ibn Jahbal's birth year as 670 AH (1270–1), and his death date as Thursday, 9 Jumāda al-ākhirā 733 AH, which falls in February 1333.

46 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:35.

47 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 35.

48 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 40.

49 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 90.

50 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 41, 45, 48, and elsewhere.

51 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 48.

with the doctrine of the *salaf* and teach them to the masses.⁵² Ibn Jahbal's anxiety over the well-being of the masses shows that the theological disagreement between Ibn Taymiyya and his opponents was not merely an academic affair. This corroborates Caterina Bori's recent contention that theological doctrines were a matter of capital importance to ordinary people within the Mamlūk sultanate and that scholars took great interest in what the ordinary people believed.⁵³ Ibn Jamā'a's treatise examined below will illustrate further that the theological issues here in play were of broad public import.

In surveying Ibn Jahbal's refutation, we begin at the end of the treatise where he most fully and systematically outlines his own theological position.⁵⁴ This will bring out the distinctively Ghazālīan character of his thinking. Ibn Jahbal takes al-Ghazālī's last work *Iljām al-ʿawāmm*⁵⁵ as his starting point and abridges the long first chapter of *Iljām* into a few pages. For both al-Ghazālī and Ibn Jahbal, the line dividing those who abstain from *taʿwīl* of God's attributes and those who engage in it falls not between the *salaf* and the later theologians as in Rāzī's rationalist *kalām*, but between the common people and the enlightened elite. Even though Ibn Jahbal takes offence at Ibn Taymiyya's charge that the *kalām* theologians render the *salaf* ignorant,⁵⁶ he evades that accusation himself. Ibn Jahbal maintains that the Prophet and some of the *salaf* did know the true meanings of God's attributes but did not share them with commoners.

Following al-Ghazālī, Ibn Jahbal outlines seven points that the common people (*ʿawāmm*) must observe. They must 1) free God of all corporeal and spatial conceptions, 2) believe and affirm that what the Prophet said about God is true even if it cannot be understood, 3) admit one's inability to comprehend, 4) keep silent, 5) refrain from interpreting (*tafsīr*), reinterpreting (*taʿwīl*), or in any way restating the texts, 6) stop thinking about them, and 7) believe firmly that the Prophet knew the meanings of the texts.⁵⁷ Al-Ghazālī adds the senior Companions of the Prophet, the saints (*awliyāʾ*), and firmly rooted scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) to his list of those who know the meanings.⁵⁸ However, the "scholars" here constitute a very limited class because al-Ghazālī relegates jurists and *kalām* theologians to the level of the commoners. He confines *taʿwīl* to the gnostic (*ʿarīf*) who may in turn share his gnosis only with those of like spirit

52 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 36–39.

53 Bori, "Politics".

54 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 80–91.

55 al-Ghazālī, *Iljām*; English translation: al-Ghazzālī, *Return to Purity*.

56 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 69–71.

57 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 80–83, abridging and summarizing al-Ghazālī, *Iljām*, 53–86; trans. al-Ghazzālī, *Return to Purity*, 23–70.

58 al-Ghazālī, *Iljām*, 84; trans. al-Ghazzālī, *Return to Purity*, 68.

and those who would benefit from it. According to al-Ghazālī, the *salaf* as a whole restrained themselves from *taʿwīl* so as not to disturb the tranquility of the people.⁵⁹ Ibn Jahbal does not elaborate to the extent that al-Ghazālī does. He says only that the common people should not compare themselves to the Prophet, his Companions, and the senior scholars, and he specifies that only a qualified scholar may practice *taʿwīl*.⁶⁰

Ibn Jahbal goes on in the final section of *Jiha* to outline proofs for God's freedom from location. He follows Ashʿarī *kalām* in asserting the priority of reason over revelation, but yet couches this in the authority of the Qurʾān and Sufi shaykhs to preserve its elitist tenor. Noting the Qurʾān's emphasis on reason, Ibn Jahbal explains that only reason and not revelation can effectively establish the existence of God and the reliability of the prophets. Reason furthermore demonstrates the error in affirming location of God, and Ibn Jahbal sketches four rational proofs for this that elite scholars derived from the Qurʾān "in a manner that the elite understood and that did not alienate the commoners".⁶¹ These proofs assert that ascribing location to God subjects God to the absurdities of finitude, temporal origination, and measure, as well as the eternal existence of something else—an independently existing location—apart from God and God's attributes.⁶² Ibn Jahbal then quotes a number of Qurʾānic verses, such as "There is nothing like Him" (Q 42:11), which, to his mind, preclude ascribing location to God and "which the elite know and that the commoners do not shrink back from", and he underlines that the Qurʾān only negates corporeality of God indirectly.⁶³ The implication is that openly denying corporeality of God would alienate the masses. It is better that they simply not think about such matters. Ibn Jahbal ends *Jiha* by explaining why God included indeterminate (*mutashābih*) verses in the Qurʾān. He maintains that most of the Qurʾān is in fact determinate (*muḥkam*), and this suffices for the commoners. Among the purposes of the indeterminate verses is distinguishing the ranks of the scholars and providing them opportunity to strive to understand these verses and thereby earn reward.⁶⁴

The Ghazālīan tenor of Ibn Jahbal's theology found in the latter part of *Jiha* permeates his refutation of Ibn Taymiyya's *Ḥamawīyya* in the earlier part. Ibn Jahbal rejects Ibn Taymiyya's claim that numerous unambiguous and plain texts prove that God is above the Throne and the sky literally or in reality

59 al-Ghazālī, *Iljām*, 67–74; trans. al-Ghazzālī, *Return to Purity*, 42–53.

60 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 83.

61 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 85.

62 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 83–89.

63 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 89–90 (quote on 89).

64 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 90–91.

(*ḥaqīqatan*) because this ascribes location to God. According to Ibn Jahbal, the Prophet did not teach that, and certainly not to the common people. Nor did the Companions and the Successors ever teach it to the masses out of concern to preserve their welfare. The *salaf* were silent on the matter, and, echoing the elitism of al-Ghazālī, Ibn Jahbal adds that no one will ever find him commanding the common people to delve into such matters either.⁶⁵

Ibn Jahbal then reviews Ibn Taymiyya's proof-texts one by one to undermine his allegedly corporealist readings and provide alternative interpretations.⁶⁶ Two examples will illustrate his procedure. Ibn Jahbal rejects Ibn Taymiyya's use of the Qur'ānic verse, "To Him ascend (*yaṣ'adu*) fair words" (Q.35:10), to prove that God is above because the verse in fact makes no explicit reference to God being in the sky or over the Throne. More substantively, he argues that ascent (*ṣu'ūd*) can only imply "overness" (*'ulūw*) when it is taken literally as an attribute of bodies. Corporeality is obviously not relevant when speaking of God. Therefore, ascent must instead mean "acceptance" (*qubūl*).⁶⁷ The second example is the verse, "The All-Merciful sat on the Throne" (Q. 20:5). While Ibn Jahbal acknowledges this verse as his opponents' strongest proof text, he disallows rendering "sitting" (*istiwā*) in the sense of "sitting down" (*julūs*) or "settling" (*istiqrār*) because the Arabs understand these terms only in relation to bodies. Since God is not a body, Ibn Jahbal reasons, God's sitting points instead to His greatness, power, authority, and sovereignty.⁶⁸

This interpretation of God's sitting on the Throne raises the question of how to interpret the verse, "God is with you wherever you are" (Q. 57:4). Ibn Jahbal quotes most of Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of this.⁶⁹ He deems Ibn Taymiyya's view that God is literally above the Throne and simultaneously literally with us preposterous, and he rejects the Ḥanbalī theologian's appeal to the *ḥadīth* of the mountain goats, "God is above the Throne, and He knows what you are doing", because it does not actually contain the word "with".⁷⁰ Ibn Jahbal furthermore undermines Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of "with" (*ma'*) as conjunction (*muqārana*). Ibn Taymiyya's argument that conjunction does not imply contiguity and spatial proximity does not persuade Ibn Jahbal, nor does Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of God's withness as God's knowledge. Ibn Jahbal counters that if Ibn Taymiyya can interpret "with" as knowledge, then

65 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 37–38, 40–41, 43.

66 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 45–65.

67 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 45–46.

68 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 47–49.

69 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 54–58 (includes quotation of much of Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, 102–6).

70 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 55.

he has no reason not to interpret “above” (*fawq*) as rank, dominion, and sovereignty instead of as location. Ibn Jahbal also asks how Ibn Taymiyya knows that the literal meaning of “withness” is knowledge and that God’s “sitting” and the *ḥadīth* of the mountain goats prove that God is “above” literally. He answers sarcastically that it must have been mystical unveiling (*kashf*).⁷¹ In short, Ibn Jahbal dismisses Ibn Taymiyya’s interpretations as irrational and censures him for inconsistency. If God’s being with us is interpreted nonliterally as God’s knowledge, then God’s sitting must be interpreted nonliterally as well. Ibn Taymiyya cannot interpret one nonliterally but not the other.⁷²

Ibn Jahbal also has no sympathy for the double perspective of Ibn Taymiyya’s hermeneutic of denying knowledge of *kayfiyya* and affirming knowledge of the *ma‘na*, and he flattens it to polemical advantage. He observes appreciatively that Ibn Taymiyya says in *Ḥamawīyya* that God “sits on the Throne with a sitting that befits His majesty”,⁷³ and he notes that this is in fact his own position and the position of the *kalām* theologians on God’s sitting. This is to say, as noted above, that Ibn Taymiyya’s perspective of denying knowledge of the *kayfiyya* bears a certain resemblance to the *tafwīd* of the Ash‘arī *tafwīd-ta’wīl* hermeneutic. However, Ibn Jahbal regards affirming location of God as unbefitting of God’s majesty, and he again charges Ibn Taymiyya with inconsistency.⁷⁴ He does not allow that Ibn Taymiyya’s discussion of God’s aboveness works at the linguistic level of affirming knowledge of the *ma‘nā*, the other side of his hermeneutical coin.

Ibn Taymiyya’s theological genealogies also come in for Ibn Jahbal’s critique. Ibn Jahbal does not broach Ibn Taymiyya’s charge in *Ḥamawīyya* that the error of Jahm b. Ṣafwān derived from the Sumaniyya. However, he denies that *ta’wīl* came into Islam by way of the Jews and the polytheists. To Ibn Jahbal’s mind, Jews and polytheists are in fact guilty of something far different: assimilationism (*tashbīh*). Moreover, contrary to Ibn Taymiyya, the matter also has nothing to do with the Ṣābi’a, although he allows that Ja’d b. Dirham came from their centre of Ḥarrān. Ibn Jahbal then turns the tables and counters that Ibn Taymiyya’s own doctrinal lineage goes back to Pharaoh who believed the laughable notion that the God of Moses was in the sky. Additionally, Ibn Jahbal explains that Ibn Taymiyya got it wrong on Bishr al-Marīsī: nothing objectionable

71 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 58–59.

72 See also Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 48.

73 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 49 (quoting Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya*, MF 5:28, with minor differences).

74 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 48–49.

in the doctrine of al-Marīṣī found its way to later Ash'arīs such as Ibn Fūrak and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.⁷⁵

In similar fashion, Ibn Jahbal picks apart Ibn Taymiyya's genealogy of allegedly correct doctrine.⁷⁶ By and large, he disputes how Ibn Taymiyya reads his authorities. For example, he accuses Ibn Taymiyya of failing to heed the saying of al-Thawrī, al-Awzā'ī and others, "Let [the attributes] pass by as they came", instead of attributing location to God.⁷⁷ Ibn Taymiyya of course does not acknowledge this saying as an exhortation to silence about the meanings of the attributes but as a command to respect and communicate their plain senses without *ta'wīl*. In another example, Ibn Jahbal insists that Ibn Taymiyya is incorrect to say that al-Ash'arī affirmed that God existed in a location. He acknowledges that al-Ash'arī affirmed that God sat on the Throne. However, he denies that this implies location because al-Ash'arī also affirmed that God has no need of place.⁷⁸

To sum up Ibn Jahbal's criticism, Ibn Taymiyya disturbs the masses with his attribution of location to God. He is inconsistent to interpret God's being with us nonliterally but not God's sitting on the Throne, which he interprets instead to mean above and over. Moreover, he misreads theological history against the respectable tradition of Ash'arī *kalām* theology. Ibn Jahbal counters by reinterpreting Ibn Taymiyya's proof texts, and turning his theological genealogies against him.

Beyond the polemics, two fundamentally different hermeneutics separate Ibn Jahbal and Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Jahbal interprets God's attributes from within a single frame of reference that divides the attributes into those like God's knowledge and power that may be affirmed in their plain and literal senses and those like God's sitting that require *ta'wīl* because they imply corporeality, temporality, and location. In this unitary perspective, God's distinction from the world consists most fundamentally in His incorporeality and atemporality. By way of contrast, Ibn Taymiyya claims to affirm all of God's attributes in their plain senses while also denying knowledge of the modality for all of them. God's distinction from the world then consists, firstly, in existing above the world at the level of *ma'nā* and, secondly, at the level of *kayfiyya*, in being utterly unlike creatures in all of their attributes, not just those involving spatial extension, corporeality, and temporality. This crucial difference in hermeneutical

75 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 71–72.

76 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 73–80.

77 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 73.

78 Ibn Jahbal, *Jiha*, 79.

frameworks is what divides Ibn Taymiyya not only from Ibn Jahbal but also from his other three early Mamlūk opponents examined in what follows.

4 Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Hindī (d. 715/1315–16)

Our second Mamlūk Ashʿarī voice is the *kalām* theologian Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Hindī.⁷⁹ Al-Hindī was brought in to debate Ibn Taymiyya during the second hearing in Damascus in 705/1306, but he performed poorly and was eventually replaced.⁸⁰ Ibn Taymiyya obviously got the better of al-Hindī, and al-Subkī reports him to have said, “Oh Ibn Taymiyya, I see that you are only like a sparrow. Whenever I want to grab it, it escapes from one place to another.”⁸¹ Despite this, al-Subkī in his *Ṭabaqāt* regards al-Hindī as the second leading Ashʿarī theologian of his day, with ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Bājī (d. 714/1315) of Cairo at the fore: “Al-Bājī was the most knowledgeable person on earth of the school of al-Ashʿarī in *kalām* theology. He in Cairo and al-Hindī in Syria were the two who stood in support of the school of al-Ashʿarī, and al-Bājī was the most naturally talented and the best at debating.”⁸² Unfortunately, no works by al-Bājī relevant to the present enquiry appear to have survived.⁸³

Al-Hindī’s work germane to this study is his *al-Risāla al-tisʿīniyya fī l-uṣūl al-dīniyya* (hereafter *Tisʿīniyya*), which dates to sometime before 713/1313, the copy date of an early manuscript.⁸⁴ This is not a direct refutation of Ibn Taymiyya, but it was most likely written in response to the challenge that he posed. At the beginning of the book, al-Hindī explains that the occasion for writing was a disturbance provoked by Ḥanbalis:

79 His full name is Ṣafī l-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. Muḥammad al-Hindī al-Urmawī; biographies include al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:162–64; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 16:113; al-Ṣafadī, *A’yān*, 4:501–5, al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi* 3:239; al-Dhahabī, *Iḥṣār*, 4:41–42; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Durar*, 4:14–15; Ibn ‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 8:68–69.

80 For Ibn Taymiyya’s own account of his debate with al-Hindī, see MF 3:181–89; trans. in Sherman Jackson, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial”, 74–80.

81 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9 164.

82 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 10:339–66 (al-Bājī’s biography, quotation on 10:340); al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 10:342, reports that Ibn Taymiyya met al-Bājī in Egypt and showed great deference toward his religious knowledge.

83 See Monferrer Sala, “Al-Bājī”, for a brief discussion of al-Bājī’s works. Ibn Taymiyya, al-Bājī, and several other scholars together wrote poems against an unbeliever appealing to predestination to justify his unbelief, on which see Holtzman, “Dhimmi’s Question”, especially the biography of al-Bājī on pp. 33–34.

84 al-Hindī, *Tisʿīniyya*; see the editor’s introduction for a full account of what is known of al-Hindī’s life and works (pp. 28–59, with discussion of *Tisʿīniyya* itself on pp. 50–52).

This treatise comprises ninety issues pertaining to the foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*). I wrote it when I saw students from Syria devoting themselves to learning this discipline after the famous disturbance (*fitna*) that took place between the orthodox (*ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*) and some Ḥanbalis.⁸⁵

Al-Hindī's *Tis'īniyya* is a straightforward manual of Ash'arī *kalām* treating the traditional theological topics of God, prophecy, eschatology, and related matters. Unlike the *Ṭawālī' al-anwār* of the contemporary Ash'arī theologian al-Bayḍāwī (d. between 699/1299–705/1306) who lived under the Īlkhānids in Persia,⁸⁶ al-Hindī's book spends very little time on philosophical preliminaries. However, he still works within the philosophized world of post-classical Ash'arism, deploying Ibn Sīnā's division of existence into the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*), which is God, and contingent existence (*mumkin al-wujūd*), which is everything else,⁸⁷ and expounding not only traditional *kalām* proofs for God's existence from temporal origination (*ḥudūth*) but also philosophical proofs from contingency (*imkān*).⁸⁸ After establishing basic epistemological principles and proving the existence of God, al-Hindī argues that God is a thing (*shay'*) not like other things,⁸⁹ that God is not a substance (*jawhar*), a body (*jism*), or an accident (*'araḍ*),⁹⁰ and that God is not in a location (*jiha*) or a space (*hayyiz*).⁹¹ Having established and explained all of this, al-Hindī writes, "We have gone on at length about [this topic] on account of people's difficulty in it because of the disturbance mentioned at the beginning of the book".⁹² With this, al-Hindī signals his primary reason for writing *Tis'īniyya*: to clarify against Ḥanbalis, and probably Ibn Taymiyya specifically, that God does not exist in a location or a space.

To make the point, al-Hindī outlines ten rational proofs for his own view and then refutes his opponents and explains how to interpret their textual proofs. The order of presentation illustrates the priority that al-Hindī's Ash'arī *kalām* gives to reason over revelation. He first establishes what is rational and then interprets revelation in that light. Al-Hindī's method throughout his ten

85 al-Hindī, *Tis'īniyya*, 62–63.

86 al-Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*. For a discussion of the philosophical preliminaries in al-Bayḍāwī's text see Eichner, "Handbooks", 504–7.

87 al-Hindī, *Tis'īniyya*, 69.

88 al-Hindī, *Tis'īniyya*, 80–81.

89 al-Hindī, *Tis'īniyya*, 90.

90 al-Hindī, *Tis'īniyya*, 91–95.

91 al-Hindī, *Tis'īniyya*, 96–104.

92 al-Hindī, *Tis'īniyya*, 104.

rational proofs is the *kalām* disjunction. He proves that God is free of location and space by reducing the opposite hypothesis to absurdity. Some of al-Hindī's proofs refer the reader back to his earlier arguments in *Tis‘īniyya* against God being a substance or a body, which would entail, among other things, divisibility, composition, temporal origination, spatial extension, contingency, and finitude in God.⁹³ Three examples from among his ten proofs will illustrate his specific argumentation against God being in a space and a location.

Al-Hindī's first argument asserts that if God were in a space and a location, this would be the case either necessarily or contingently. If necessarily, then the location, the space, and God all together would have to be either eternal or originated, both of which are impossible. Location and space, for al-Hindī, cannot be eternal, and God cannot be originated. And if God were in a location and a space contingently, then, among other things, He would have no need of them, and it would be of His perfection to do without them.⁹⁴

Another argument presupposes that a God who exists in a space is spatially extended (*mutaḥayyiz*). Now, a space does not need a spatially extended object to fill it because a void space is possible (contrary to the Aristotelian tradition). Conversely, the spatially extended object (e.g. God) does need a space in which to exist. So, the existence of the space is prior to the existence of the spatially extended object in rank. To al-Hindī, it is so patently absurd that a space should be prior to God that he does not bother to say so.⁹⁵

Our third and final example from among al-Hindī's arguments assumes that God is above the Throne by a certain distance. If that distance were infinite, that would yield the oddity of an infinite distance being confined between two limits, God and the Throne. If the distance were finite, then something else apart from God would have had to have assigned or preponderated that particular distance. Otherwise, the distance would have been assigned without a preponderator (*murajjih*). Al-Hindī takes all of these possibilities to be absurd, which proves that God is not subject to location and space.⁹⁶

Having proved rationally that God is not in a space or a location, al-Hindī in *Tis‘īniyya* attends to the arguments of his opponents. Three of these arguments are rational. These are not found in Ibn Taymiyya's *Ḥamawīyya*, and, as noted above, he does not appear to have mounted rational proofs for his position until writing *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya*. It seems unlikely that al-Hindī is

93 al-Hindī, *Tis‘īniyya*, 91–94.

94 al-Hindī, *Tis‘īniyya*, 96–97 (first argument of al-Hindī's ten).

95 al-Hindī, *Tis‘īniyya*, 98 (sixth argument).

96 al-Hindī, *Tis‘īniyya*, 99 (ninth argument).

responding to this later work, as he makes no mention of it. He may have found these arguments refuted in the works of al-Rāzī.

Al-Hindī's opponents' first rational proof is that it is intuitive knowledge that every existent is either in something else—as in the case of an accident in a substance—or distinct from it—as in two distinct substances. Some argue as well that it is irrational to posit an existent (i.e. God) that is neither inside the world nor outside it. Thus, all existents are subject to space and location, God included. Al-Hindī responds that this is not intuitive because rational people differ over the matter and most take the opposite view. Moreover, his opponents' arguments apply only to the realm of the senses, not the realm of pure reason, and rational proofs have already shown that God cannot exist in a location.⁹⁷

The second rational proof of al-Hindī's opponents argues that a God who is an existent subsisting in Himself (*qā'im bi-nafsihi*) is spatially extended since that is what it means to be self-subsisting. Al-Hindī counters that self-subsistence carries a more general meaning than mere spatial extension.⁹⁸

The opponents' third rational argument is that people raise their hands to the sky when supplicating God, which proves that God is located in the sky. Al-Hindī disagrees. Raising the hands to the sky is simply what is appointed for supplication just as one prays toward the Ka'ba in the ritual prayer. Moreover, placing the forehead on the ground as part of the ritual prayer does not mean that God is located in the earth.⁹⁹

Al-Hindī then moves on in *Tis'niyya* to his opponents' textual proofs, which include the Qur'ānic verses, "The All-Merciful sat on the Throne" (Q. 20:5), and, "They fear their Lord above them" (Q. 16:50), as well as a *ḥadīth* report about the Prophet and a slave girl in which the Prophet asked the girl, "Where is God? She pointed to the sky. Then, he—God bless him and give him peace—said, 'Free her! She is a believer'".¹⁰⁰ Al-Hindī responds with the rule of interpretation that is familiar from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, but with a more conservative outcome. The passage is here quoted in full:

If reason-based and tradition-based proofs oppose one another, it is not possible to affirm both or deny both because it is impossible to affirm two opposites or deny both of them. Nor [is it possible] to affirm revealed

97 al-Hindī, *Tis'niyya*, 100–1.

98 al-Hindī, *Tis'niyya*, 101.

99 al-Hindī, *Tis'niyya*, 102.

100 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:318–19 (Kitāb al-masājid wa-mawāḍi' al-ṣalāh, Bāb taḥrīm al-kalām fī l-ṣalāh, 537).

tradition because reason is the foundation of revealed tradition (*al-‘aql aṣl al-naql*).¹⁰¹ The probative value of revealed tradition is not established until the existence of the Maker and His attributes—knowledge, power, and His acting by free choice—and miraculous proof for the truthfulness of the messengers have been established. It is not possible to establish these matters by revealed tradition, on account of the impossibility of circular reasoning. If we denied reason-based proofs in order to authenticate tradition-based proofs, we would deny the root to authenticate the branch, but denying the branch necessitates denying the root. Authenticating revealed tradition by denying reason necessitates denying both of them, which is impossible. So, nothing remains but to affirm reason and divert what the tradition-based plain senses (*ẓawāhir*) indicate from their plain senses and delegate (*tafwīd*) knowledge of them to God—Exalted is He—and work to clarify their reinterpretations (*ta’wīlāt*). The first is better, and it is the doctrine of most (*akthar*) of the *salaf*. The second is the doctrine of most of the theologians (*uṣūliyyūn*). We do not believe that they did not permit the first. On the contrary, according to most of them, both [*tafwīd* and *ta’wīl*] are permitted. As for the ancients, perhaps they did not permit the second on account of the danger in it.¹⁰²

In this text, al-Hindī first establishes that reason is the basis for accepting revealed tradition and that reason must be given precedence in case of conflict. When reason conflicts with the plain sense of revelation, the plain sense must be denied, and its meaning must be delegated to God (*tafwīd*) or reinterpreted (*ta’wīl*). The first is the way of “most” of the *salaf* and the second the way of many later theologians.

Al-Hindī’s ascription of *tafwīd* to only “most” of the *salaf* substantially qualifies Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s typically universal ascription, as it indirectly envisages some scholars among the *salaf* practicing *ta’wīl*. This subtly undermines Ibn Taymiyya’s polemic against the *tafwīd-ta’wīl* hermeneutic for rendering the *salaf* entirely ignorant of the meaning of God’s attributes. Al-Hindī does not tell us why he limits *tafwīd* to only “most” of the *salaf*—whether to oppose Ibn Taymiyya or otherwise—but in making this qualification al-Hindī joins Ibn Jahbal and, as we will see below, Ibn Jamā’a and al-Sarūjī, in affirming that

101 For analysis of the expression *al-‘aql aṣl al-naql* in al-Rāzī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya, see Griffel, “Ibn Taymiyya and His Ash‘arite Opponents”.

102 al-Hindī, *Tis‘īniyya*, 103; cf. al-Rāzī, *Ta’īs*, 217.

some among the *salaf* practiced *taʿwīl*. None of our four early Mamlūk scholars presents the *salaf* as unanimous in their adherence to *tafwīd*.

Despite this, and unlike Ibn Jamāʿa, who will be examined next, al-Hindī states his preference for *tafwīd* over *taʿwīl*, and he explains that most theologians permit this. Consistent with his preference, al-Hindī does not go on in *Tisʿīniyya* to venture reinterpretations of the textual proofs of his opponents. However, he does come back to clarify what he thinks the *ḥadīth* of the slave girl might mean. He says that it occurred to him that the Prophet only asked the slave girl where God was in order to determine whether she was still an idol worshipper. As idols are gods located on earth, the slave girl proved that she was no longer an idolater by pointing to the sky. Her action proved nothing more than that she had converted to Islam.¹⁰³ While al-Hindī's interpretation of this *ḥadīth* might be considered a form of *taʿwīl*, he does not identify it as such, and he does not appear to think that it undermines his stated preference for *tafwīd*.

With his preference for *tafwīd*, even for himself as a *kalām* theologian, there is no hint of Ibn Jahbal's elitism in al-Hindī's rationalist discourse. What he and Ibn Jahbal do share is a unitary hermeneutical perspective that divides God's attributes into two kinds: those that may be affirmed in their plain senses and those whose plain senses must be negated because they imply corporeality, location, and temporality. This contrasts with Ibn Taymiyya's double perspective, which affirms the plain senses of all of God's attributes in the texts of revelation and simultaneously denies that God's revealed attributes resemble those of creatures in any fashion.

5 Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿa (d. 733/1333)

Our third expression of early Mamlūk Ashʿarism is the Shāfiʿī chief *qāḍī* of Egypt Badr al-Dīn b. Jamāʿa and his book *Īdāḥ al-dalīl*.¹⁰⁴ None of Ibn Jamāʿa's contemporary biographers calls him an Ashʿarī except the historian al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), and his *Īdāḥ* is not written in the dialectical style of *kalām* works. Yet, Ibn Jamāʿa is a vigorous advocate and practitioner of *taʿwīl*, in marked contrast to Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Hindī, and his interpretative framework in *Īdāḥ* falls firmly

103 al-Hindī, *Tisʿīniyya*, 104.

104 Biographical sources for Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd Allāh b. Jamāʿa include al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9 139–46; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Durar*, 3:280–83; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 16 252–53; al-Ṣafādī, *Aʿyān*, 4:208–13; al-Ṣafādī, *Wāfi* 2:18–20; al-Dhahabī, *Ibar*, 4:96; al-Dhahabī, *Muʿjam shuyūkh*, 448–49; Ibn ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 8 184–86.

within the Ash‘arī *tafwīd-ta’wīl* hermeneutic. Ibn Jamā’a’s stated purpose in *Īdāh* is to combat those who assimilate God to creatures (*tashbīh*) and ascribe bodily attributes to God (*tajsīm*), and he complains of “some later Ḥanbalīs” (*ba’d al-Ḥanābila al-muta’akhhirīn*) who claim that God’s sitting means that God touches the Throne and fills it up.¹⁰⁵ The exact date and circumstances of *Īdāh* are not known, but it is possible that Ibn Jamā’a wrote it to counter Ibn Taymiyya. He interacted with Ibn Taymiyya through his trials over doctrine in Egypt, including visiting him in prison in 707/1307 to try to convince him to compromise his beliefs.¹⁰⁶ Ibn Jamā’a does not mention Ibn Taymiyya in *Īdāh* explicitly, but the following reference to the harmful influence of some scholars known for *tashbīh* may allude to him: “As for the doctrine of *tashbīh*, groups of commoners close to the eminent scholars think well of some [scholars] to whom that is ascribed (*ba’d man yunsab dhālika ilayhim*), and they depend on them in following their religion since that doctrine is closer to the minds of commoners and their understanding”.¹⁰⁷ Even if Ibn Taymiyya was not the direct target of *Īdāh*, Ibn Jamā’a was clearly concerned about scholars in his own day influencing the commoners toward *tashbīh* and *tajsīm*.

Ibn Jamā’a’s *Īdāh* is a large compilation of interpretations of texts from the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* preceded by an introduction justifying *ta’wīl*. At the beginning of the introduction, Ibn Jamā’a outlines what he sees to be two opposing errors. One error, more commonly found among the elite, is the doctrine of the Mu‘tazilis who strip God of His attributes (*ta’ṭīl*). Ibn Jamā’a observes that Mu‘tazilism has disappeared from the region where he lives and only its memory remains. The opposite error is assimilationism, which leads to corporealism and is more common among the masses.¹⁰⁸

In *Īdāh* Ibn Jamā’a builds his case first from the perspicuous character of the Arabic language. He alleges that those falling into corporealism and assimilationism misinterpret the Qur’ān and the Sunna in ways that do not befit God’s majesty (*mā lā yalīq bi-jalāl Allāh*) because they fail to respect the way the language works. They do not take into consideration Arabic’s use of metaphor, metonymy, ellipsis, and other linguistic features that the original Arab audience of revelation understood and did not have to investigate. Just as the original hearers of the Qur’ān knew without question that the verse, “Do not bind your hand to your neck, nor extend it fully” (Q. 17:29), referred to miserliness and generosity, respectively, so also they knew without having to

105 Ibn Jamā’a, *Īdāh*, 107–8.

106 Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 16:56.

107 Ibn Jamā’a, *Īdāh*, 89–90.

108 Ibn Jamā’a, *Īdāh*, 89–90.

ask that the verse, “He sat on the Throne ... and He is with you wherever you are” (Q. 57:4), was to be understood nonliterally (*majāz*) and with *taʿwīl*, and not in ways unbefitting of God. It was only when non-Arabic speakers entered Islam that misunderstandings arose, with some erring into corporealism and others stripping God of his attributes.¹⁰⁹ In his introduction, Ibn Jamāʿa simply takes for granted that it befits God’s majesty to be incorporeal and exist outside space and time. He does not provide proofs for this in the fashion of *kalām* manuals. However, he does supply some rational considerations to support his linguistic analysis in the body of *Īdāh*. These will be noted below.

While Ibn Jamāʿa’s preference for *taʿwīl* is already apparent in the early pages of *Īdāh*, he allows that there are in fact two correct positions on God’s attributes. Both positions are certain that the texts of the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* intend nothing unbefitting of God. Anyone who adheres to the plain sense (*ẓāhir*) of a text that does not befit God is an innovator (*mubtadiʿ*).¹¹⁰ Beyond this, the two positions diverge. The first engages in *taʿwīl* to fight innovators directly by reinterpreting the texts in ways that befit God’s majesty. The second position, which is identified with that of the *salaf*, is to be “definitive that what does not befit the majesty of God—Exalted is He—is not intended, and silent as to which of the meanings befitting the majesty of God—Exalted is He—is intended, if the verbal form (*lafẓ*) could carry several possible meanings (*maʿānī*) befitting the majesty of God”.¹¹¹ Ibn Jamāʿa explains that this is because these meanings may not be understood, may be supra-rational, or may not have words indicating them in the language.¹¹² Although Ibn Jamāʿa does not speak of the *salaf* delegating meanings to God (*tafwīd*) as do al-Rāzī and al-Hindī, his view appears to be close to theirs. However, he indirectly leaves open the possibility of *taʿwīl* among the *salaf* when the verbal form admits of a single meaning befitting God’s majesty. More importantly, as we will see below, he does in fact appeal to the *taʿwīl* of the *salaf* in a particular case.

Ibn Jamāʿa explains that some great scholars preferred the way of the *salaf* as the safer path while others resorted to *taʿwīl* in time of need.¹¹³ He supports his own strong preference for *taʿwīl* over the silence of the *salaf* with five arguments. First, leaving the meaning unclarified leaves room for doubt and idle speculation that would not befit God. Second, it is better to fill people’s hearts with some kind of meaning rather than none; otherwise, they are left open to

109 Ibn Jamāʿa, *Īdāh*, 90–91.

110 Ibn Jamāʿa, *Īdāh*, 92, 96.

111 Ibn Jamāʿa, *Īdāh*, 92.

112 Ibn Jamāʿa, *Īdāh*, 96.

113 Ibn Jamāʿa, *Īdāh*, 92–93.

doubt. Third, inquiring after the truth when one is able to do so is better than remaining in ignorance. Fourth, silence may suffice for the believer, but it will not suffice to correct the unbeliever, the assimilationist, and the corporealist. Fifth, silence contradicts numerous statements in the Qur’ān that claim that it is itself clear, as in “A light has come to you from God and a clear Book” (Q. 4:15). Moreover, Ibn Jamā’a explains, if God had spoken about His attributes in ways that could not be understood, it would contradict the Qur’ān, as when it says, “This is a clarification for the people and a guidance” (Q. 3:138). To Ibn Jamā’a it would be of no use for God to address people in terms that they do not understand. He clarifies further that his view rules out saying that it is not known what God meant by attributes such as face (*wajh*) or saying that God’s attributes are simply different from ours, as when one says that for God there is “a face not like our faces, a hand not like our hand, and a descent not like our descent”.¹¹⁴ Unlike Ibn Jahbal who reserves *ta’wīl* for the elite and Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Hindī who prefers the *tafwīd* of the *salaf*, Ibn Jamā’a seeks to spread *ta’wīl* to everyone in order to combat Ḥanbalī errors, and most likely the opposing interpretations of Ibn Taymiyya.

The body of *Īdāh* confirms Ibn Jamā’a as the most fervent advocate of *ta’wīl* examined in this study as he goes on at length providing reinterpretations of Qur’ānic verses and *ḥadīth* reports. To illustrate Ibn Jamā’a’s *ta’wīl*, we examine his reinterpretations of God’s sitting (*istiwā*), aboveness (*fawqīyya*), and withness (*ma’īyya*). After his introduction, Ibn Jamā’a takes up verses affirming God’s sitting on the Throne (Q. 20:5, etc.), and he devotes more space to these than any other texts.¹¹⁵ He explains that God’s sitting cannot mean sitting down (*qu’ūd*), settling (*istiqrār*), or erectness (*i’tidāl*) because such meanings do not befit God’s majesty. Both the *salaf* and the practitioners of *ta’wīl* agree on that. However, the *salaf* then fall silent while the practitioners of *ta’wīl* go on to interpret sitting as possessing (*istīlā*) and vanquishing (*qahr*) in order to rule out any thought of body, space, place, movement, temporal origination, and such like. Here Ibn Jamā’a invokes rational considerations explicitly for the first time. He argues that, if God’s existence were tied to place and time, that would entail the eternity of place and time with God or even their existence prior to God. It would also mean that God needs a place and that God is limited and exists as a body. For Ibn Jamā’a all of this is impossible. God is prior to all else and independent of everything else. If He were a body, He would be composed and in need of His parts.¹¹⁶

114 Ibn Jamā’a, *Īdāh*, 94–96 (quote 95), see also 152.

115 Ibn Jamā’a, *Īdāh*, 101–8.

116 Ibn Jamā’a, *Īdāh*, 102–4.

Ibn Jamā'a then fields an objection: since existent things exist only in space and in a location (*jiha*), denying location of an existent is tantamount to denying the existence of the existent itself. Ibn Jamā'a counters that existence is of two kinds. One kind is accessible to the outer senses (*ḥiss*) and the two inner senses of the imagery (*khayāl*) and the estimation (*wahm*). The background here is Ibn Sīnā's psychology in which the imagery and the estimation process images and information from the world of space and time; a similar analysis is found in fuller form in al-Rāzī's *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs*.¹¹⁷ The other kind of existent is not accessible to these senses but to reason. God is of this kind "since He is not a body, accident or substance, and so His existence apart from location and space is authenticated rationally (*'aqlan*)".¹¹⁸ God's existence and God's freedom from corporeality, location, and space are all proven rationally, and the senses cannot access these truths. Moreover, Ibn Jamā'a argues, most rational people agree that there are things that do not exist in space and that cannot be imagined by the mind, things such as intellects, souls, and matter. In this light, according to Ibn Jamā'a, texts such as, "To Him ascend fair words" (Q. 35:10), and "The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him" (Q. 70:4), do not indicate location in space. Instead, they point to God as the one in whom all matters find their end, as in the Qur'ānic verses, "Truly, matters return to God" (Q. 42:53), and, "To Him returns the entire matter" (Q. 11:123).¹¹⁹

Ibn Jamā'a extends his denial of location for God to the negation of space or place in the meaning of God's aboveness. Thus, "above" in the verse, "He is the Vanquisher above His servants" (Q. 6:61), must be reinterpreted to mean rank (*rutba*), and in "They fear their Lord above them" (Q. 16:50), "above" refers to God's power and His servants' fear of chastisement.¹²⁰ In similar fashion, God's withness (*ma'yya*) in verses like, "God is with you wherever you are" (Q. 57:4), cannot mean nearness in distance. Rather, it means God's knowledge, power, or authority: "It is necessary to reinterpret it with what has been transmitted by the *imāms* from the *salaf*, from Ibn 'Abbās and others, which is that what is intended is the withness of knowledge and power, not of place. Sufyān al-Thawrī said: His knowledge. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk said: His power and His authority".¹²¹ Ibn Jamā'a here invokes reinterpretations of God's withness from the *salaf*, not later theologians. Ibn 'Abbās (d. 69/688) was a Companion of the Prophet, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (d. 105/723) a Successor, and Sufyān al-Thawrī

117 See for example al-Rāzī, *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs*, 46–48, 52.

118 Ibn Jamā'a, *Īdāh*, 105.

119 Ibn Jamā'a, *Īdāh*, 104–6.

120 Ibn Jamā'a, *Īdāh*, 108–9.

121 Ibn Jamā'a, *Īdāh*, 147; see also 110 and 136.

(d. 161/778) an early exegete and jurist. It is thus apparent that from Ibn Jamā'a's perspective, the *salaf* were not uniformly silent on interpretative difficulties posed by God's attributes. This appeal to the *ta'wīl* of the *salaf* brings us to our last early Mamlūk scholar Shams al-Dīn al-Sarūjī.

6 Shams al-Dīn al-Sarūjī (d. 710/1310)

Al-Sarūjī was a prominent Ḥanafī jurist and *qādī* in Egypt whose precise theological affiliation is not known.¹²² As a Ḥanafī, al-Sarūjī may have been influenced by the Māturīdī *kalām* tradition common among Persian and central Asian Ḥanafis. Yet, it is not evident that Māturīdism had reached Egypt in the late 1200s and early 1300s when al-Sarūjī was active.¹²³ We include al-Sarūjī within this study because he played a direct role in combating Ibn Taymiyya and his views fall within the scope of the Ash'arī position.

Biographical notices of al-Sarūjī report that he wrote a refutation of Ibn Taymiyya, to which Ibn Taymiyya then responded. In the words of Ibn Kathīr, al-Sarūjī wrote "*Itirāḍāt* (Objections) against Shaykh Taqī l-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya in *kalām* theology. Shaykh Taqī l-Dīn refuted it in several volumes (*mujalladāt*), and invalidated its argument".¹²⁴ Ibn Taymiyya himself mentions both al-Sarūjī's work and his response in his *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya*: "One of the people delivered a work to me by the best of the opposing *qāḍīs*, and it contained different kinds of questions and objections. Then, I wrote a

122 Biographical sources for Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Sarūjī al-Miṣrī al-Ḥanafī include Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Durar*, 1:91–92; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Raf' al-iṣr*, 41–42; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 16:84; al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 1:159–61; and al-Tamīmī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:261–62. Al-Sarūjī was originally a Ḥanbali from Sarūj near Ḥarrān in northern Mesopotamia who switched to the Ḥanafī law school; see Bori, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 148, for further biographical information and references.

123 Madelung, "The Spread of Māturīdism", 148–49, notes that Burhān al-Dīn 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Balkhī (d. 548/1153) was the first major Ḥanafī jurist in Damascus and had studied under the Māturīdī theologian Abū l-Mu'īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114) in Bukhārā. While the extent to which Māturīdī theology permeated Damascene Ḥanafī circles is not clear, it was certainly known 200 years later since Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), who lived the latter part of his life in Damascus, wrote his *Nūniyya* poem to conciliate between the Ash'arī and Māturīdī theologies; on this see Madelung, "The Spread of Māturīdism", 166–67; Berger, "Interpretations of Ash'arism and Māturīdism", 697–99; and Badeen, *Summitische Theologie*, 10–19 (German), 1–18 (Arabic text including the *Nūniyya*). However, Bruckmayr, "The Spread and Persistence of Maturidi Kalam", suggests that the more traditionalist theology of the Ḥanafī al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933) prevailed in Syria as in Egypt.

124 Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 16:84. Also mentioning al-Sarūjī's refutation are Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Durar*, 1:92; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Raf' al-iṣr*, 42; and al-Tamīmī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:262.

response to that and elaborated it in several volumes”.¹²⁵ He furthermore refers to al-Sarūjī’s work when explaining that he wrote *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya* to oppose the erroneous thinking of al-Rāzī: “That required rounding out the response to *al-I’tirāḍāt al-miṣriyya al-wārida ‘alā al-futyā al-ḥamawīyya* (The Egyptian Objections against the *Ḥamawīyya* fatwa) with discussion of what Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Rāzī mentioned in his book called *Ta’sīs al-taqdīs*”.¹²⁶ Ibn Taymiyya also alludes to al-Sarūjī’s treatise in a letter that he wrote in prison responding to a message that he received in Ramaḍān 706/March–April 1307: “When I was in the tower [of the Cairene citadel], it was mentioned to me that someone had written a commentary censuring the *Ḥamawīyya* fatwa. It was sent to me, and I wrote what came to several volumes”.¹²⁷ Based on this evidence, Ibn Taymiyya wrote his refutation of al-Sarūjī’s *I’tirāḍāt* while in prison during his first year in Egypt, that is, between Ramaḍān 705/March–April 1306 and Ramaḍān 706/March–April 1307. Presumably, al-Sarūjī had written his *I’tirāḍāt* not long before Ibn Taymiyya learned about it.

Unfortunately, al-Sarūjī’s *I’tirāḍāt* is not known to be extant. However, a small portion of Ibn Taymiyya’s response has been found and published, and it contains as well a few paragraphs from somewhere in the middle of al-Sarūjī’s text dealing with the interpretation of authentic *ḥadīth* reports implying corporeality of God.¹²⁸ Al-Sarūjī makes two key points in this short span of text that are relevant to our inquiry. First, he explains that rational proofs oppose the plain senses of these *ḥadīth* reports, and so they must be reinterpreted because God does not resemble His creatures and He is not subject to limitations, temporal origination, and spatial extension.¹²⁹ This locates al-Sarūjī squarely within the framework of at least the *ta’wīl* aspect of the Ash‘arī *tafwīd-ta’wīl* hermeneutic, which requires freeing God’s attributes of corporeal and spatial connotations.

The second key point is that al-Sarūjī attributes *ta’wīl* to the *salaf* themselves, not just to later *kalām* theologians, and he roots this in the authority of the Prophet’s Companion Ibn ‘Abbās:

The *salaf* have reinterpreted many [authentic *ḥadīth* reports] and [Qur’ānic] verses, and Ibn ‘Abbās permitted *ta’wīl* for us in many verses. He is the scribe (*ḥabr*) of this nation and the interpreter (*turjumān*) of the

¹²⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya*, 1:6–7.

¹²⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya*, 1:8.

¹²⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb waraqa ... Ramaḍān 706*, MF 3:227. See footnote 37 above for further discussion of Ibn Taymiyya’s letter.

¹²⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb al-I’tirāḍāt*, 3–4, 157.

¹²⁹ al-Sarūjī, *I’tirāḍāt*, in Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb al-I’tirāḍāt*, 4.

Qur’ān. He said, “When something of the Qur’ān is hidden from you, seek it out in poetry, for it is the linguistic treasury (*dīwān*) of the Arabs”. He said, “Concerning His statement, ‘The day the shin is laid bare’ (Q. 68:42), have you not heard the saying of the Arabs, ‘The war broke out upon us upon a shin [i.e. violently]’?”¹³⁰

Since al-Sarūjī’s full work is not available, we lack the wider context of this strong affirmation of the *salaf* engaging in *ta’wīl*. It could derive from a Ghazālīan elitism like that of Ibn Jahbal in which some scholars among the *salaf* know the meanings of God’s attributes but refrain from sharing them with the masses. Or it could fall within a more general affirmation that most of the *salaf* practiced *tafwīd* while a few among the *salaf* and many among the later theologians engaged in *ta’wīl*. This would resemble the views of al-Hindī and Ibn Jamā‘a. Or, while seemingly unlikely, it could be that al-Sarūjī takes the unique view that the *salaf* as a whole practiced *ta’wīl* and that *tafwīd* is not permissible. Whatever be the case, al-Sarūjī’s claim that the *salaf* interpreted or reinterpreted verses pertaining to God’s attributes effectively counters Ibn Taymiyya’s argument in *Ḥamawīyya* that attributing *tafwīd* to the *salaf* renders them ignorant of the meanings of God’s attributes. Ibn Taymiyya’s accusation had no doubt stung.

7 Conclusion

To sum up, fundamentally different hermeneutical strategies divide Ibn Taymiyya and his early Mamlūk opponents and render their discourses practically incommensurable. In his *Ḥamawīyya* Ibn Taymiyya approaches all of God’s attributes in the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* literature from two perspectives. From the perspective of linguistic meaning (*ma’nā*), Ibn Taymiyya claims to uphold the plain (*ẓāhir*) senses of the revealed texts for all attributes, and he understands these plain senses to secure God’s distinction from the world by locating God above the sky and the Throne. From the perspective of modality (*kayfiyya*), Ibn Taymiyya insists that all of God’s attributes are unique and bear no resemblance to the corresponding attributes of creatures whatsoever. There is no distinction in this regard between attributes such as God’s sitting on the

130 al-Sarūjī, *I’tirāḍāt*, in Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb al-I’tirāḍāt*, 3. Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb al-I’tirāḍāt*, 107–13, responds that he could not find any *ta’wīl* among the interpretations of the Companions of the Prophet, and that “shin” in the verse, “The day the shin is laid bare” (Q. 68:42), does not refer to God having a shin.

Throne and attributes such as power and knowledge. The modalities of all attributes are equally unknown. Ibn Taymiyya does not acknowledge the paradoxical character of his double perspective, speaking both of the plain senses of God's attributes within the human world of meaning and the complete unlikeness of the attributes from created reality. He simply practices affirming knowledge of the *ma'nā* and denying knowledge of the *kayfiyya* across the full range of God's attributes.

The other four early Mamlūk scholars examined in this study write within the compass of the Ash'arī *tafwīd-ta'wīl* hermeneutic that regards God's attributes from a single perspective, across only one plane of existence. This plane of existence divides between the corporeal and spatial on the one hand and the incorporeal and nonspatial on the other, with God falling on the latter side of the divide. Thus, all connotations of corporeality and spatial extension must be denied of God's attributes reported in revelation. Beyond this, the meanings of attributes subject to such connotations may be delegated to God (*tafwīd*), or the meanings may be reinterpreted (*ta'wīl*) to indicate something understood to lie outside space and time such as God's knowledge or power.

To Ibn Taymiyya, the Ash'arī denial of corporeality and location strip God of His rightful attributes such as sitting on the Throne and being above the sky. To Ash'arīs, Ibn Taymiyya's affirmation of God's sitting and aboveness from the perspective of knowledge of the *ma'nā* falls into corporealism. Ibn Taymiyya's denial of knowledge of the *kayfiyya* from his other perspective is insufficient to redeem his discourse in their eyes. For Ash'arīs to appreciate Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutic, they would have to acknowledge his double perspective, and for Ibn Taymiyya to sympathize with the Ash'arī hermeneutic, he would have to adopt their single perspective and affirm explicitly that God is incorporeal and nonspatial.

Despite the incommensurability of their hermeneutical frameworks, Ibn Taymiyya appears to have influenced the development of early Mamlūk Ash'arism, even apart from the obvious fact that his theological activism provoked the emergence of an Ash'arī opposition literature. While Ibn Jahbal, al-Hindī, Ibn Jamā'a and al-Sarūjī share the core incorporealist presupposition of the Ash'arī *tafwīd-ta'wīl* hermeneutic, they all depart from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's unqualified ascription of *tafwīd* to the *salaf*. Ibn Taymiyya attacks al-Rāzī and his ilk in *Ḥamawīyya* for making the *salaf* out to be ignorant of the meanings of God's attributes by adhering to *tafwīd*. Ibn Jahbal and al-Sarūjī respond directly to Ibn Taymiyya's criticism by highlighting the practice of *ta'wīl* among the *salaf*. Additionally, Ibn Jamā'a appeals to the practice of *ta'wīl* among the *salaf* during his interpretive work, and al-Hindī acknowledges it

indirectly. None of our four early Mamlūk theologians ascribes *tafwīd* to the *salaf* without qualification, and the pressure of Ibn Taymiyya’s polemic probably deserves the credit for this.

Beyond this, these four early Mamlūk scholars adopt different stances toward *ta’wīl*. Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Hindī prefers *tafwīd* over *ta’wīl*, although he does not prohibit the latter. Al-Sarūjī affirms *ta’wīl* among the *salaf*, but no more is known of its implications. Ibn Jahbal adopts a Ghazālīan approach that distinguishes the enlightened elite from the common people. The elite from the Prophet down to Ibn Jahbal himself could engage in *ta’wīl*, but the commoners had to be prevented from doing so. Ibn Jamā’a provides the most vigorous programme of *ta’wīl* as he aims to counter the influence of Ḥanbalī corporealism among the masses. With Ibn Jamā’a there is no reserve about sharing *ta’wīl* with ordinary people; it is indeed best to fill the minds of everyone with correct notions of God to ward off doubt, ignorance, and idle speculation. It is certainly plausible that Ibn Jamā’a had concluded that this was the only effective recourse against the influence of Ibn Taymiyya.

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Continuing Conversations

Late Sunni Kalām-Theology's Ongoing Engagement with Philosophy

Aaron Spevack

1 Introduction

On his deathbed, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) was reported to have exclaimed “oh Allāh, the faith of the elderly women!” Recent studies of al-Rāzī’s later works indicate such statements to be in line with his expressed mild skepticism¹ of the extent of rational theology’s utility. However, Maghrebi scholar and author of popular theological primers Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490) asks us first to consider whether or not we should interpret the above deathbed exclamation as an all-out condemnation of personal belief rooted in analytic theology, philosophical discussions, and the rational sciences? Was the archetype of simple grandmotherly faith that was devoid of intellectual rigor considered to be the epitome of true belief, unshakable yet without any grounding in rationally defensible premises? Was his statement both a repudiation of the validity of *kalām* as well as an indication of its ineffectiveness at the moment of truth? Were there no reasons to reflect on the great questions of existence, the nature of the universe and its origins, the nature of humanity, and so on?

Al-Sanūsī,² writing in the ninth/fifteenth century, informs us that those who answered these questions in the affirmative were incorrect and that the majority of scholars instead considered one’s faith invalid if it was not rooted in rational reflection (*naẓar*) and the ability to prove and defend one’s beliefs against doubts. Rather, according to al-Sanūsī, al-Rāzī’s dying words should be interpreted in harmony with the opinion on the legal obligation (*wājib sharʿī*)

1 For a full exposition of al-Rāzī’s mild skepticism, especially as it regards rational speculation and philosophical theology, see Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 181–203.

2 This article is based on a paper delivered for a conference entitled *Philosophical Theology in Islam: The Later Ashʿari Tradition* held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London in September 2014. After revising it for publication, Khaled El-Rouayheb’s groundbreaking book *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century* was published; this work treats al-Sanūsī’s thought in rich and thoughtful detail, specifically with regard to *taqlīd* in matters of faith. The reader is directed to El-Rouayheb’s analysis—which, due to publication schedules and deadlines, is unfortunately largely absent from this article before you—for further investigation into the reception and spread of al-Sanūsī’s opinion on the faith of the *muqalīd* and his theological works in general. See El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century*, 189ff.

to rationally reflect on the verities of faith, that is, *wujūb al-naẓar*. This seems defensible, as al-Rāzī's detailed expressions of skepticism in his later works seem to indicate that rational reflection was necessary yet insufficient, as it only leads to indirect knowledge of God's existence.³ Rather, certain faith was best achieved by means of spiritual discipline (*al-taṣfiya wa-l-riyāda*), remembrance of Allāh (*dhikr*), and a contemplative reading of the Qur'ān. A few centuries later, Ibrāhīm al-Laḳānī (d. 1041/1631) was still discussing this question,⁴ as were the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Azharī scholars Muḥammad al-Faḍālī (d. 1236/1821), his student Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī (d. 1860), Muḥammad 'Arafa al-Dasūqī (d. 1230/1815), and others.

What may have started as a debate between Ash'arīs, Māturīdis, and Mu'tazilis regarding whether or not the obligation to know God (*wujūb al-ma'rifa*) was rooted in rationality or divine legislation⁵ appears to have evolved into a discussion of the necessity to reflect (*wujūb al-naẓar*) on the rational proofs for God's existence and attributes. In other words, regardless of whether or not one who is unaware of revelation is held accountable in the afterlife for proper belief in God, the question remained whether or not one who was raised a believer or converted must nonetheless base his or her monotheistic faith on the contemplation of the created world and thereby, via rational argument, affirm the veracity of the Qur'ān's claims of God's existence and other attributes. In other words, the question of the obligation to know Allāh (*wujūb al-ma'rifa*) was with regard to all sane and rational adults—those who had heard the message of a prophet and those who had not—whereas the question of the obligation to base one's belief in Allāh on rational contemplation (*wujūb al-naẓar*) regarded the believer who had already met the obligation to know Allāh (*wujūb al-ma'rifa*) but may have done so merely via belief in what had been reported and transmitted by another (*taqlīd*).

Discussions about the implications of this obligation to reflect on the proofs of the core elements of faith continued until at least the nineteenth century, and included such issues as the validity of belief based on following the opinion of another without knowing its general or specific proofs (*taqlīd*). In other words, was a Muslim who claimed to believe in the eternal verities of the Qur'ān truly a believer if he or she could not, at minimum, defend these beliefs

3 Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 199.

4 It is worth noting that al-Laḳānī does not explicitly mention al-Sanūsī. See: El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 188, note 49.

5 al-Bājūrī, *Tuḥfat al-murīd*, 81–83. See also Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*", 37–62. See also Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", 197–217. See also Rudolph, "Ratio und Überlieferung in der Erkenntnislehre al-Aṣ'arī's und al-Māturīdī's".

with general proofs, such as knowing God's existence with certainty because the universe is contingent on a pre-eternal (*qadīm*) creator?

At the core of philosophical and theological⁶ discussions are reflections on the nature of existence, knowledge, right and wrong, and other fundamental and universal questions. That being the case, the fact that Ash'arī theologians felt religiously compelled to continue discussing the human responsibility to reflect on oneself⁷ and the perceived universe and the resultant fundamental philosophical questions produced by such contemplation (i.e. the existence of God, the nature of existence, etc.), indicates that premodern Ash'arī theologians in particular viewed this engagement as something more than mere repetition of past discussions with long gone interlocutors, despite some claims to the contrary.⁸ In other words, that each individual must start from scratch, so to speak, and reflect on their own contingent nature and that of the universe, and deduce therefrom—with the aid of past theologians no doubt—the necessity of a creator ascribed with necessary attributes (pre-eternity, sempiternity, independence, etc.) indicates a willingness to expose oneself (and one's students) to skepticism, doubt, and heresies; it also indicates an active intellectual engagement with core philosophical problems, rather than merely preserving the inherited intellectual tradition of past theologians. Rather than merely rehashing old theological challenges and just narrating and explaining the responses of their forefathers, I argue that Sunni theologians between

6 The distinction between philosophy and theology is often blurred and relative to individuals employing the terms. The blurring of philosophy and theology in *kalām* texts is beyond the scope of the current paper, but it is worth keeping in mind that the questions of *wujūb al-ma'rifa* and *wujūb al-naẓar* pertain to contemplating some of the fundamental shared questions of philosophy and theology without recourse to the scripture, and therefore could be considered philosophy by those definitions of philosophy that consider it to be a method of determining truth via rational means without recourse to or consideration of revelation.

7 Harkening back to Q. 41.53 and Q. 51.21 the contemplation of one's own contingent nature as well as that of other objects and phenomena of the universe beyond oneself is considered the beginning of the rational contemplative process that leads to the realization that the contingent universe is dependent on a creator. Al-Laḳānī states in lines 15 and 16 of his didactic poem *Jawharat al-tawḥīd*: "So reflect (*unẓur*) upon your self then move to the higher world and then the lower, you will find therein a creation of great wisdom ..." See al-Bājūrī, *Tuhfat al-murīd*, 84–86. Also see al-Sanūsī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīda al-kubrā*, 71 wherein he begins a substantial discussion of the proof for God's existence from contemplation of the human being's contingency upon a creator. "The nearest thing that will remove you from *taqlīd* with the aid of Allāh is that you look to the thing closest to you and that is yourself ... You know necessarily that you were not then you were, and you know that there was an existentiator that brought you into being due to the impossibility that you existiated yourself ...".

8 For claims to the contrary, see Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 353–54.

the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries continued to discuss fundamental⁹ philosophical problems with impressive nuance and autonomy, and may have offered new or more varied solutions not found in earlier theological works. However, for this assertion of continued engagement to hold true, we must find evidence of these discussions of the fundamental questions in the later works of Ash'arī theologians, a task that is often thwarted by the nature and tone of the commentary tradition.

The extent to which these scholars did engage with these fundamental questions, and the subtle discussions that branched out from them, is still being explored. That scholars continued to engage with fundamental questions of human experience in and of itself does not entail the absence of decline,¹⁰ especially if the results of their engagement were purely derivative. However, if a multitude of differing perspectives emerges from these engagements, and the arguments for these differing perspectives introduce innovative ideas or methods, then these continuing conversations are worthy of our attention and study as examples of continued intellectual vibrancy. The common orientalist and modernist narrative of decline has already been challenged by many contemporary scholars in the western academy, yet we must still identify and explore the subtle points that later Ash'arīs, Māturīdīs, and others discussed, either in their written works, or perhaps, though less discernable, in their oral discussions about the texts they wrote and taught.

In this paper, I explore the possibility that there is significant evidence of robust and innovative continued conversations over the fundamental and derived¹¹ questions of philosophy and theology, and that the existence of such conversations is proof of the continued vibrancy of later theological traditions, in contradistinction to those claims that the Islamic world fell into intellectual decline or tended to merely preserve past knowledge. I share some observations on a sample of these conversations and discuss clusters of thinkers of various periods and locales; these observations indicate that for certain issues we can identify various stages of early and later discussions that continued into the late premodern and early modern eras. I also reflect on our approaches

9 Continued discussion of secondary and tertiary issues can also be evidence of intellectual vibrancy, but in this article I primarily focus on the fundamental questions shared by philosophy and theology.

10 It does, however, problematize the caricatures of Islamic intellectual history that posit a deathblow to philosophy after the twelfth century.

11 A fundamental question might be "what is existence?" whereas a derived question might be "is existence the same as essence, or is it other than the essence?" Another fundamental question might be "what is the nature of God?" whereas a derived question might be "is God's attribute of Speech an attribute of meaning or is it an attribute of action?"

to texts, and specifically highlight the need to think in terms of text-nexuses (i.e., texts connected by shared topics, authors, commentaries, etc.) rather than preferring atomistic philology (i.e., the excessive focus on one or a few texts). Additionally, I call our attention to the possibility of reconstructing some of the possible content of conversations that took place “above the text” so to speak.

2 Times, Topics, and Conversation Tables

We may identify a few core topics that exemplify the continued vibrancy of later Ash‘arism, topics discussed at various stages of Ash‘arī intellectual history that continue to generate varying and differing responses. The topics chosen for this brief investigation are

- 1) the obligation to use reason and rational proofs to know and believe in God (*wujūb al-ma‘rifā* and *wujūb al-naẓar*);
- 2) the nature of existence and its relation to the essence of a thing; and
- 3) the study and development of the science of logic.

From these examples of topics discussed in the foundational stages of Ash‘arī thought—including Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī¹² (d. 324/935), Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī¹³ (d. 403/1013), and others—followed by a middle period of development in the era of al-Rāzī and immediately thereafter, and then in what might be called the later period in the late premodern and early modern era (al-Sanūsī, al-Dasūqī, etc.), we can identify important clusters of scholars from various periods. It is clear that foundational, middle, and later scholars engaged in continuing conversations over many issues, even if the written medium (that is, the *ḥawāshī* or super-commentary tradition) potentially restrained the conversational flow.

I begin with a brief periodization of Ash‘arī history in Egypt in particular, then discuss the above-mentioned topics that evidence the continued discussion and development of certain core philosophical and theological problems, and conclude with some reflections on text-nexuses deduced from the conversations identified in various works. In framing this discussion, I rely heavily on the fifteenth-century Maghribī scholar al-Sanūsī and his later Egyptian interpreters. Al-Sanūsī’s reception of the thought of early foundational scholars was by no means uncritical, nor was his reception of that of later foundational scholars such as al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), or

¹² Founder of the Ash‘arī school of theology.

¹³ One of the principle early transmitters of al-Ash‘arī’s thought.

later scholars such as al-Rāzī and post-Rāzī scholars of the Persian¹⁴ school. He did not merely receive and express the views of earlier scholars, rather, he engaged with them.¹⁵ Likewise, al-Sanūsī's Egyptian interpreters, such as Ibrāhīm al-Laḳānī in the seventeenth century, and al-Dasūqī, al-Faḍālī (d. 1236/1821), and al-Bājūrī in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, continued to discuss various issues that al-Sanūsī and other Maghribī scholars had pondered and interpreted in their time, along with the texts of Persian scholars that were already being studied and critiqued in fifteenth-century Egypt and thereafter.¹⁶

These aforementioned scholars (and others) can be understood as clusters of thinkers with varying perspectives discussing certain common issues over which scholarly disagreement occurs. By identifying who was conversing with whom, whether they were contemporaries or debated across history, we can produce a chronological map of the historical development of ideas, and also establish connections between texts from specific chronological and geographical points—such as seventeenth-century Cairo—that should be studied together, and then linked to the chronological nexus from early to late. Furthermore, when we find chronologically and geographically diverse scholars of different methodological or *madhhab* affiliations clustered around an opinion, we can deduce that scholars continued to discuss and develop these issues over the generations.

2.1 *Periodization*

Elsewhere I have put forth¹⁷ the following approximate time frames in an attempt to offer a working periodization of Ash'arī intellectual history in Egypt:

1. The foundational era of al-Ash'arī and his immediate successors through al-Juwaynī.¹⁸

14 In using terms such as “Persian” as opposed to “Arab”, I do not intend the actual ethnicity of any specific author. Rather, I follow here al-Suyūṭī's use of the terms in identifying approaches to theology and legal methodology, one relying heavily on the rational sciences (the Persian method) and the other more reliant on transmitted knowledge and methods produced by those who did not delve deeply into the rational sciences (the Arab method). Al-Suyūṭī was himself of Persian lineage on his father's side, but adhered proudly to the “method of the Arabs”. El-Rouayheb, *Syllogisms*, 268.

15 He often uses the language of *ijtihād*, “*qultu (I say)*”.

16 See Spevack, “Egypt and the Later Ash'arite School”, 534ff.

17 Spevack, “Egypt and the Later Ash'arite School”, 534ff.

18 The doctrines of al-Ash'arī had reached Ifrīqiya by the middle of the tenth century by means of scholars who had studied with the students of al-Ash'arī. It is claimed that the first to introduce his teaching in Tunis was a man named Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd Allāh al-Zabīdī, alternatively al-Zabīrī, popularly known as al-Qalāsni. See Iḥnāna, *Taṭawwur al-madhab al-Ash'arī*, 67. Although al-Ayyūbī is credited for popularizing the school in

2. The era of al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 589/1193)¹⁹ (fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries).
3. The era of Persian influence (seventh/thirteenth to tenth/sixteenth centuries), including Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390), etc.
4. The era of Maghribī influence (tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries), with al-Sanūsī at the forefront.
5. The era of Persian, Maghribī, and Egyptian synthesis (ca. eleventh/seventeenth to thirteenth/nineteenth centuries), including al-Laḳānī and his son through al-Bājūrī and his contemporaries in the nineteenth century.

Other models can be constructed for Ottoman Turkish scholars in the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition, Ottoman Kurdish scholars in the Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī tradition, Mughal scholars in the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition, etc. For the sake of brevity, I focus on the late Egyptian scholars and their particular reception of the Persian and Maghribī theological works, while recognizing that there were also very important discussions of foundational philosophical and theological issues in the other traditions as well. This periodization, combined with a study of text-nexuses (discussed below) helps us trace the discussion of topics across time and geography, topics that provide evidence of the continued vibrancy and development in the rational sciences.

2.2 Topics

2.2.1 *Wujūb al-Maʿrifa* and *Wujūb al-Nazar*

One topic that was continually contemplated and discussed by foundational Ashʿarī thinkers until the era of Persian, Maghribī, and Egyptian synthesis is the question of *wujūb al-naẓar*, or the religiously mandated obligation for Muslims to critically reflect on the core issues of monotheistic belief (*tawḥīd*), namely the proofs for God's existence and attributes. The discussion is closely linked to the issue of *wujūb al-maʿrifa*²⁰ or the salvific necessity to know and

the twelfth century, there is record of Ashʿarīs in Fatimid Egypt. See: Leiter, "Hanbalism in Egypt", 166. As for whether or not these popularizers of the Ashʿarī school in the Islamic West passed through Egypt is not yet clear.

19 Al-Ayyūbī is included here, not for his scholarly contribution, but because he made the Ashʿarī school the standard-bearer of orthodoxy when he defeated the Fatimids. See Spevack, *Archetypal Sunni Scholar*, 51ff.

20 An important connection between the two issues is that *naẓar* as multistep inferential reasoning is considered by many to lead to *maʿrifa* (understood generally to be faith). Furthermore, some see *naẓar* as buttressing and protecting one's *maʿrifa* from doubts and heresies, especially for one whose *maʿrifa* might have been reached through accepting whatever was transmitted from previous generations without proof (*taqlīd*). There is, however, disagreement as to whether a person's belief is considered *maʿrifa* if it is not reached via *naẓar*. On this disagreement see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 181.

believe in God and the issue of whether this necessity pertains to one who has not been reached by the teachings of a prophet. There appear to be three fixed perspectives on this issue, as discussed in greater detail below. The first is that knowledge of God is necessary for salvation only if one has been reached by the message of a prophet. The second is that knowledge of God alone is necessary for salvation regardless of whether or not one has been reached by the message. The third is similar to the second, except that it also considers knowledge of good and evil to be deducible by the sound and unaided intellect. The key difference for our purposes is that the issue of the necessity to reflect on and understand the proofs for God's existence and attributes (*wujūb al-naẓar*) presupposes that one has already been reached by the message, and now must base their belief in this message on sound reasoning, not merely on following the opinion of another. In discussing the issue of *wujūb al-naẓar* in his auto-commentary²¹ on his larger creed (*al-Kubrā*), al-Sanūsī cites the opinions of those he identifies as the imams—Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, Abū Bakr b. Fūrak²² (d. 406/1015), al-Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī,²³ and others who opined that the faith of one who blindly follows the opinions of others without proof (*muqallid*) with regard to matters of belief (as opposed to law) is not valid. Al-Sanūsī claims this is “the truth about which there is no doubt.”²⁴ He offers the following counter arguments offered by those that regard the faith of the *muqallid* to be sound:

1. that the entirety of the *ṣaḥāba* (Companions) died without knowing anything of atoms (*jawāhir*) and accidents (*a'rāḍ*);
2. that some of the early pious forefathers (*salaf*) said (obligatory) “upon you is the belief of the elderly women (*'ajā'iz*)”;
3. that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī was reported to have stated at death “Oh Allāh, the faith of the elderly women”, a report that al-Sanūsī interprets and denies the apparent implication of, along with a similar statement by 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 101/720); and

It seems however that al-Sanūsī—as reported by al-Bājūrī—thought that the student who learned the proofs from the teachers—rather than figuring them out for oneself—was an *'arīf* (knower and believer), so long as they examined and saw their validity themselves. See al-Ghursī, *Ḥāshiyat al-tahrīr*, 146. Furthermore, there is debate as to whether *ma'rifa* and *īmān* (faith) are synonymous, or if *īmān* is further qualified as *taṣḍīq* (assent or affirmation). Al-Ghursī, *Ḥāshiyat al-tahrīr*, 146, note 1.

21 A commentary written on one's own work.

22 Another important early transmitter of the Ash'arī school.

23 Important link in the transmission of the Shāfi'ī school of law with a strong connection to the Ash'arī school's interpretive principles. Also, he was the teacher of al-Ghazālī.

24 al-Sanūsī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīda al-kubrā*, 29.

4. that one often sees a *muqallid* with stronger faith and deeper insight than that of the practitioners of *kalām*.²⁵

After a lengthy discussion, al-Sanūsī concludes that the *muqallid*'s faith is nonetheless invalid, and he is to be feared for in the questioning of the grave and the hereafter. The upshot of his reasoning is that *ma'rifa* as faith cannot be reached except through *naẓar*, for even the veracity of the Qur'ān is determined via *naẓar*.²⁶ One cannot quote the Qur'ān as proof until the existence of Allāh is first affirmed—which is established via the rational necessity for the universe to have a creator—and the Qur'ān's status as revelation is established via the prophetic miracles (*mu'jizāt*) which necessarily occur by the creative power of an existent creator-god who possesses will, power, and knowledge.²⁷

When discussing the issue of *wujūb al-naẓar* in his auto-commentary on his introductory creed called *Umm al-barāhīn*, al-Sanūsī mentions a group of scholars who disagree with his opinion and consider *naẓar* a condition of the perfection of one's faith, rather than its validity. As such, it would be meritorious but not an obligation. He mentions Ibn Abī Jamra (d. 699/1300), al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1070), Abū l-Walīd b. Rushd (d. 595/1198),²⁸ and al-Ghazālī, among others who hold this opinion. Here we see a disparate group of scholars from multiple schools and methodological affiliations, different centuries and lands, discussing, or continuing to discuss, a single topic. That in different times and places, scholars felt compelled to weigh in on the debate, indicates that no final opinion had been reached. Since some scholars may align with al-Ghazālī with regard to *naẓar* and *kalām*, others with al-Sanūsī, and still others with a middle road between the two (such as al-Bājūrī (d. 1860) discussed below), there seems to be some justification for responding to the partisans of views with which one disagrees.

In the nineteenth century, the Egyptian scholar al-Bājūrī discussed this pair of issues (*wujūb al-ma'rifa* and *wujūb al-naẓar*) in his commentary on al-Sanūsī's *Muqaddimāt*;²⁹ he mentions the three opinions of the early scholars on the necessity of having certain knowledge of God (*wujūb al-ma'rifa*). The Ash'arīs (1) consider certain knowledge of God via rational reflection to be legally necessary (*wājib shar'ī*, i.e., conditioned by having been reached by the message of Islam). This is in opposition to the Māturīdīs (2), who considered certain knowledge of God—but not the other beliefs and rulings of the

25 al-Sanūsī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīda al-kubrā*, 34.

26 For a detailed discussion of al-Sanūsī's answers to the four objections mentioned above, see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 175–88.

27 al-Ghursī, *Ḥāshiyat al-tahrīr*, 148–49 note 3.

28 al-Sanūsī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīda al-kubrā*, 31.

29 al-Bājūrī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Bājūrī*, 12.

sharī'a—to be necessary by means of rational reflection on the world, with or without access to revelation. And (3), the Mu'tazilis considered certain knowledge of God along with knowledge of good and bad to be accessible by sound reason alone.³⁰

From this discussion of *wujūb al-ma'rifa* we arrive at the issue of the believer who does not attain certain knowledge of God via rational contemplation (*al-naẓar*) but rather follows the beliefs of others without proof (*taqlīd*). There are three opinions on his state: (1) he is a disbeliever without doubt; (2) he is a sinful believer; or (3) he is a believer with no sin. Al-Bājūrī offers us the preponderant opinion (i.e., the *rājiḥ*), that the one in question is a sinful believer if he relies on *taqlīd* but is able to reflect on the proofs, or he is a believer without sin for relying on *taqlīd* if he is unable to reflect on the proofs. Al-Bājūrī, his teacher al-Faḍālī before him, and al-Laḳānī a few centuries earlier, all opted for this preponderant opinion, and all critiqued al-Sanūsī's harsher opinion.³¹

Although the issue over whether or not a person is held accountable for belief in God's existence and oneness (*wujūb al-ma'rifa*) if he has not been reached by revelation seems to be settled, with scholars opting for one of the aforementioned categories (the Ash'arī, Māturidī, or Mu'tazilī opinions), the issue of the requirement that one reached by the message of Islam know and reflect on the proofs for these beliefs (*wujūb al-naẓar*) was not a closed case in any of the five periods of Ash'arī development in Egypt mentioned previously. Furthermore, the debate was not limited to Egypt, which is mentioned here only by way of example. One sees a similar phenomenon in West Africa, with the spread of al-Sanūsī's teachings via the *Kabbenkoobe* movement.³²

30 In other words, the Ash'arīs argue that there is a legal obligation (*wājib sharī'*) to know God but this obligation only becomes necessary once a person has been reached by the message of Islam; one who has not been reached by the message is not held accountable for belief in God and the afterlife. The Māturidīs argued that sound intellect was sufficient to charge a person with the duty of knowledge of God's existence, oneness, independence, etc., and that even one who had never been reached by the message of Islam would be held accountable in the afterlife for their belief or lack of belief in a singular creator God. They did not, however, charge such a person with the obligation to know right and wrong, even if the intellect has a share in determining such things. In other words, the obligation to know of and believe in God (*wujūb al-ma'rifa*) was a rational necessity (*wājib 'aqlī*), not just a legal obligation. The Mu'tazilis, like the Māturidīs, considered belief in a singular creator-God to be a rational obligation (*wājib 'aqlī*) that did not require access to revelation in order to hold one accountable in the afterlife, but also considered one responsible for knowledge of right and wrong.

31 See al-Bājūrī, *Tuḥfat al-murīd*, 76–79.

32 Brenner, "Histories of Religion in Africa", 152.

It would be enlightening to further examine the development of opinions on *wujūb al-naẓar* among Egyptian scholars during the period between al-Sanūsī and al-Bājūrī and others.³³ Al-Sanūsī's work reached Egypt within about fifty years of his death, as evidenced by the commentary of Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī l-Minūfī l-Shādhilī (d. 939/1532)³⁴ on al-Sanūsī's *Umm al-barāhīn*. Within a century, scholars at al-Azhar had begun the tradition of commenting on al-Sanūsī's work.³⁵ How was the issue of *wujūb al-naẓar* received, and did discussions over the various disagreements evolve, or had the Egyptian Ash'arīs already decided on this issue of *wujūb al-naẓar* by the fifteenth century, when al-Sanūsī propounded his more stringent opinion?

Conversations continued about the necessity of reflecting on the proofs of the core beliefs in their general form (*ijmālī*) and about the necessity of reflecting on the detailed metaphysical and epistemological foundations of these proofs (*tafṣilī*), at least for those able to do so. The very fact of their continued relevance is evidence of the perceived importance of many fundamental philosophical and theological questions; these questions mattered and continued to be explored.

The notion that late premodern scholars were empty shells who blindly regurgitated past opinions merely in order to preserve them, and who debated with ghosts from the past via a tangled web of references to derivative and muddled super-commentaries (*ḥāshiya*) is indefensible, or at the very least extremely problematic. The idea that such learned scholars who delved deeply into the debates between philosophers and theologians were somehow immune from personally contemplating and considering the core issues they were writing about smacks of nineteenth-century Orientalist exaggerations of intellectual decline, such as Edward Sachau's statement, "but for al-Ash'arī and al-Ghazālī the Arabs might have been a nation of Galileos, Keplers, and Newtons".³⁶ Furthermore, it would be a mistake to take at face value the self-effacing comments of later Muslim scholars who functioned within a devolutionary eschatological worldview.³⁷ Rather, we should seek out the variety

33 For a discussion of al-Sanūsī's influence in the "Turkish-speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire", see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 189–93.

34 al-Ḥibshī, *Jāmi' al-shurūḥ*, 1:276.

35 For a more detailed discussion of Egyptian commentaries on al-Sanūsī's work between the tenth/sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Spevack, "Egypt and the Later Ash'arite School".

36 Cohen, *How Modern Science Came into the World*, 72.

37 That is to say, the statements of later Muslim scholars that give the impression that Islamic civilization had become nothing but broken remnants of a once glorious past should not be taken as absolute proof of intellectual decline, as such statements were often informed

of subtle developments and verifications (*taḥqīq*) of such scholars' preferred perspectives in the many issues that undergird and branch out from the necessity to reflect on the core rational proofs for God's existence (*wujūb al-naẓar*).

2.2.2 Existence and Essence

The issue of God's existence, and the nature of existence itself, was the subject of continued discussion that carried over from early philosophical and theological texts to later post-Ghazālī theological texts by way of continued engagement with Ibn Sīnā's thought. The nature of existence is one of the fundamental subjects of both philosophy and theology, though there is some variation between the two sciences with regard to methods and goals, at least according to some usages of the terms.³⁸

That the nature of existence remained a topic of discussion and disagreement is clearly evinced by the nineteenth-century writings of al-Bājūrī,³⁹ who took up the issue of whether or not the attribute of existence is the entity of the thing itself, or other than it. Explaining the term *wujūd* (existence) in his commentary on al-Sanūsī's *Muqaddima*, al-Bājūrī narrates al-Ash'arī's view that existence and the *dhāt* (entity; the thing itself) are the same, and follows this with al-Rāzī's view that the attribute (*ṣifa*)—in this case, existence—and the thing to which it is attributed (*mawṣūf*)—the entity (*dhāt*) or existent thing (*mawjūd*)—are distinct and separate. The crux of the problem is whether existence is the same as the entity (*'ayn al-dhāt/al-mawjūd*) or an actual attribute that is in addition to the entity (*bi-zīyādat al-dhāt/al-mawjūd*). A divine attribute's being in addition to Allāh's entity pertains to its carrying

by faith-based assumptions about a decline toward the chaos that precedes the Day of Judgment, and are more likely expressions of humility than claims of inability.

38 It is often assumed that philosophy is a science that deals with fundamental questions via rational methods whereas theology begins with a commitment to a particular revelation-based system and secondarily turns to philosophy and often with some discomfort or sense of refutational necessity. However, it could easily be argued that a significant portion of the *ilāhiyyāt* sections of *kalām* texts are purely philosophical as they discuss fundamental issues of philosophy from the perspective of the intellect unaided by revelation. Al-Sanūsī's position that *kalām* was not merely refutational, but rather a necessity for sound faith supports this perspective. However, philosophy can also be used to refer to a particular body of thinkers and their work that produces a different creedal position on certain core issues shared with theology. From this perspective, theology would be a term used to refer to a particular body of thinkers and their work that produced creedal positions considered to be more "orthodox" than that of the philosophers. In any case, the intent of the author or speaker using the term should be sought.

39 The following paragraphs on the nature of existence and related issues are reworked and truncated passages—with some additions—from Spevack, *Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*, 26, 138–39.

a meaning in addition to the entity, not that it is a separate and separable existent thing. A divine attribute such as knowledge (*‘ilm*) is in addition to the entity; Allāh knows not by means of his entity (*dhāt*) sans attributes—as the Mu‘tazila claim—but rather His attribute of knowledge is established in His entity (*qā’im bi-dhātihi*).⁴⁰ Existence, however, might be an attribute separate in meaning from the thing to which it is attributed, as al-Rāzī argued, or it might be synonymous with the thing to which it is attributed, as al-Ash‘arī held. Regarding the latter position, the word “existence” might be used grammatically as an attribute, and therefore in the context of a statement it is other than the thing to which it is attributed (i.e. the noun), but as an attribute of Allāh, it would then be a mental construct (*amr dhihnī intizā’ī*) without being established in His entity. Al-Bājūrī thus indicates the disagreement between early and later Ash‘arī scholars. This appears to be an undecided matter that remained open to debate; al-Bājūrī informs his readers that scholars did not consider it necessary to choose a side, as the relationship between existence and entity is a matter of a difference of opinion among the *mutakallimūn*.⁴¹

Later theologians presented their ideas on the difference between existence (*wujūd*) and entity (*dhāt*), or lack thereof, and did not always agree. For example, we might look to the Sufi Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) and his followers who saw God as existence itself,⁴² in contrast with scholars such as al-Rāzī, al-Taftāzānī, al-Bayḍāwī (d. between 699/1299–705/1306), and al-Iṣfahānī (d. 749/1348), whose views on distinguishing existence from entity also differed with those of al-Ash‘arī, as discussed above. These latter scholars expressed their analyses of the difference between existence and entity from a variety of perspectives, though they were unified, according to Wisnovsky, in doing so within the framework provided by Ibn Sīnā who challenged the opinions of earlier *mutakallimūn* who had originally conceived the issue as a distinction between a thing (*shay’*) and existence.⁴³ That they positioned their discourse in Ibn Sīnā’s framework while nonetheless differing from his conclusions indicates further development in the science of *kalām*, as Ibn Sīnā himself had left

40 Related to this is the claim that Allāh’s attributes are not the same as Him nor other than Him (*lā ‘aynuhu wa-lā ghayruhu*), a statement whose interpretations differed. Unfortunately, this is outside the scope of the current paper. For details, see al-Bājūrī, *Tuhfat al-murīd*, 140–41.

41 al-Bājūrī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Bājūrī*, 14. Also see: al-Bājūrī, *Hādhihi Ḥāshiyat*.

42 Chittick, “Ibn Arabi”, online: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/ibn-arabi/>.

43 Robert Wisnovsky, “Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition”, 110. Also see Spevack, *Archetypal Sunni Scholar*, 138.

some “loose ends” surrounding the issue of existence and the existent thing, which Ash‘arī theologians attempted to tie up.⁴⁴

Later Ash‘arī scholars such as al-Bājūrī continued to discuss these fine points of technical terminology⁴⁵ and the nature of existence when they commented on al-Laḳānī’s creedal poem *Jawharat al-tawḥīd*,⁴⁶ and al-Taftāzānī’s Ash‘arī commentary on al-Nasafī’s short treatise on Māturīdī creed, wherein al-Nasafī discusses the established existence of the essences of things (*ḥaqā’iq al-ashyā’*)⁴⁷ and the synonymous usage of terms like thing (*shay’*), existent (*mawjūd*), existence (*wujūd*) and other terms that Muslim theologians used, in contrast with the Sophists and other philosophers who gave them more specific technical meanings that allowed them to reduce the reality of things to imaginary qualities, or totally subjective and relative to the observer.⁴⁸ Al-Bājūrī began writing a super-commentary on al-Taftāzānī’s creed, wherein he treats these issues at length; he returned to them later in a more concise and better known commentary on al-Laḳānī’s *Jawhara*.⁴⁹

The development⁵⁰ we see between the early Ash‘arīs and later post-Ghazālī Ash‘arīs, as well as al-Bājūrī’s recognition that no final verdict had been reached on the relationship between existence and the entity, indicates that theologians in al-Bājūrī’s time were free to determine their own positions on the matter based on their own reasoning or assessment of another’s.⁵¹ It could be argued that a commitment to a particular *madhhab*’s official position on the matter might be the determining factor in a particular scholar’s choosing a side in a debate, but given the degree of intra-*madhhab* disagreement in general,

44 Wisnovsky, “Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition”, 128.

45 That is to say, whether or not the term “existence” could be subsumed under the technical term “attribute”, for example.

46 Spevack, *Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*, 134.

47 The reality of a thing is its essential and defining properties, such as “human” defined as a “rational animal”. Establishing their existence is to say that humans actually exist, as opposed to being imaginary or doubted by the skeptic. Another interpretation of al-Nasafī’s intent is that these essential qualities themselves (i.e. animality and rationality) actually exist in the human and are what essentially define being human.

48 al-Taftāzānī, *A commentary on the creed of Islam*, 11–12.

49 Spevack, *Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*, 134; Also see al-Bājūrī, *Hāshiya ‘alā Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id al-Nasafīyya*.

50 That is to say the development from al-Ash‘arī’s view that existence and the *dhāt* (entity; the thing itself) are the same, to al-Rāzī’s view that the attribute (*ṣifā*) and the thing to which it is attributed (*mawṣūf*) are distinct and separate, as well as other views that may differ from al-Ash‘arī’s and al-Rāzī’s opinions, including the right to be non-committal on the question, as discussed above.

51 Here ends the revised and truncated passages from Spevack, *Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*, 26, 138–39.

and with regard to the fine points of theology in particular, I am inclined to allow that individuals could choose their own positions, even if in reality there might be some who were merely narrating a position that there was some social pressure to adopt.

The phrase “God is existent in every place”, something often stated by the common folk, according to the nineteenth-century Egyptian scholar al-Ṣāwī (d. 1825 or 1826), was tied to the discussion of the nature of existence in general, God’s existence in particular, and whether or not the world’s existence was somehow unified with God’s existence. In his popular commentary on al-Laḳānī’s *Jawharat al-tawḥīd*, al-Ṣāwī argues that the expression is acceptable when properly interpreted as “He is with every existent thing, that is, He is not absent from anything”.⁵² However in his own commentary on the same work, al-Bājūrī indicates that the statement is impermissible, as it can give the mistaken impression of indwelling and incarnation.⁵³ These two contemporaries held differing views on the interpretation of expressions regarding God’s existence, and this reality clearly indicates a certain freedom of thought on the implications of the nature of God’s existence and its relation to created existence.⁵⁴

Indications that various scholars across time and place coalesced around various differing opinions in matters of faith are also evident in their discussions of certain matters rooted in sacred texts or in the implications of such beliefs that are deduced from sacred texts. I deal with these in more detail elsewhere,⁵⁵ suffice it to note that this also fits into a greater pattern of vibrancy and diversity of thought in later theological, as well as legal and mystical thought.

2.2.3 The Study and Development of Logic

We also see an ongoing discussion on the permissibility and even communal necessity of the study of the science of logic,⁵⁶ although the discussion over the legal ruling for logic eventually appears to have tended toward its obligation, despite a significant number of scholars who forbade it, or merely

52 al-Ṣāwī, *Hāshiyat al-Ṣāwī*, 146.

53 See Spevack, *Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*, 26.

54 Al-Ṣāwī as a Mālikī and al-Bājūrī as a Shāfi‘ī would likely have similar commitments to the Ash‘arī school, so I do not believe that they would be merely aligning with a popular view in their given legal schools, however, it may instead have to do with the degree of their commitment to Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings which al-Bājūrī seems less inclined towards (though certainly not wholly critical).

55 Spevack, *Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*, 26–27.

56 Spevack, *Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*, 133ff.; Also see Spevack, “Apples and Oranges”, 159–84.

recommended it. Furthermore, these three differing rulings (obligatory, forbidden, or recommended) were considered by many post-Rāzī scholars, and certainly post-Sanūsī scholars, applicable not to all aspects of the study of logic, but rather to the science of logic as it existed in the earlier periods. By the time al-Khūnajī (d. 646/1249), al-Kātibī (d. 675/1277), al-Sanūsī, al-Akhḍarī (d. 983/1575), and still later al-Quwaynī (d. 1838), al-Bājūrī (d. 1860), al-Ḍasūqī (d. 1815), and others were writing their handbooks or commentaries, they were dealing with a science that had undergone sufficient revision and development such that it could be considered a communally obligatory science, purportedly without any disagreement.

One sees a diversity of opinions within the study of logic as well, such as subtle discussions on “whether affirmation (*taṣḍīq*) is a composite of conceptions and a judgment, or merely a judgment”, as discussed by al-Jurjānī (816/1413), Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 776/1364–65), al-Kātibī, and others.⁵⁷ Khaled El-Rouayheb traces a significant development in the problem of the relational syllogism which was discussed by various scholars of Arabic logic for centuries, in contradiction to the claims of stagnation by earlier western historians of Arabic logic. Additionally, El-Rouayheb mentions the ongoing discussions over the problem of whether or not a categorical syllogism requires an entire middle term.⁵⁸

In al-Kātibī’s popular text on logic, the *Shamsiyya*, we find a discussion of whether a definition entails the apprehension of the thing defined or the apprehension of its distinction from everything else.⁵⁹ Numerous other subtle discussions regarding logic and related subjects can be found in the works of al-Jurjānī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Kātibī, al-Taftāzānī, and others, and were contemplated by the later Egyptian scholars who inherited the discussions from their Persian, Maghribī, and fellow Egyptian forefathers.

2.3 *Conversations: Chronological and Geographical Text-Nexuses*

Based on the cursory and introductory investigation of topics that indicate the continued vibrant discussions explored above, here I offer a few ideas for approaches to future research on later Ash‘arī thought and *kalām* in general. The first regards the need to continue moving away from atomistic philology, that is, working from a very limited catalog of works, perhaps those of one individual in conversation with a few of the most frequently published and studied works. The tendency toward atomistic philology reflects the availability

57 al-Rāzī, *Tahṛīr al-Qawā‘id al-mantiqiyya*, 7–11.

58 El-Rouayheb, *Syllogisms*, 41.

59 Spevack, “Apples and Oranges”, 175.

of texts to Orientalists in past generations. It is not that such an approach is bad or fruitless, only that it is limiting in its scope. A deep and sustained inquiry into a single text or the texts of a single author is extremely important and beneficial to our understanding. However, the findings from an atomistic study must be contextualized by a broader survey of texts which can also be individually studied atomistically as needed or desired. When those texts are unknown or impossible to obtain, an atomistic approach may be all that is available to the researcher. Given the greater availability of unpublished texts in digital form, as well as the ability to word-search databases of such scanned texts, a greater and sustained effort to expand our scope is needed.

Rather than this atomistic method, approaching our investigations via *text-nexuses* would likely uncover many hidden gems in the jungles of super-commentaries.⁶⁰ By text-nexuses I mean webs of interconnected texts, whose connections may be:

1. topical (i.e., contain shared topics and discussions);
2. conversational (i.e., written by authors who intentionally engage with each other's thought directly or indirectly);
3. chronological (i.e., contemporaneous);
4. and/or geographical (i.e., working in the same region).

Possible combinations of text-nexuses are many, but two important possibilities are inter-generational (extending linearly across time) and intra-generational (pertaining to the output of a particular generation). Each of these can be subdivided into inter-regional (extending across multiple geographic regions) and intra-regional (limited to a specific geographical region). An example of an intra-generational and intra-regional text-nexus would be the collective works of ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth-century Egyptian Ash'arī theologians⁶¹ such as Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520), al-Khaṭīb al-Shirbīnī (d. 977/1570), Shams al-Dīn al-Ramlī (d. 1004/1596), 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Aḥmad al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565), and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1566–67). Other chronological clusterings are possible as well, such as ninth/fifteenth through eleventh/seventeenth-century Maghribī Ash'arīs such as al-Sanūsī, al-Yūsī (1102/1691), etc.⁶² or seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth-century

60 By gems I intend overlooked analyses, observations, discoveries, explanations, proofs, or arguments that we may miss by disregarding much of the late super-commentary tradition as merely derivative. Given the quantity of unstudied and unpublished commentaries, I assume many "gems" may be waiting to be discovered.

61 I consider this a period of Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī effervescence in Egypt, one that has influenced the study of Shāfi'ī *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and Ash'arī *'aqida* (as well as Sufism) until the present era. See Spevack, *Archetypal Sunni Scholar*, 76–82 and 89–90.

62 See El-Rouayheb, "Opening the Gate of Verification", 263–81.

Persian Ash'arīs such as al-Taftāzānī, al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), al-Jurjānī, etc., or eighteenth and nineteenth-century Egyptian Ash'arīs such as al-Faḍālī (d. 1821), al-Bājūrī, al-Dasūqī, al-Ṣāwī (d. 1825–26), etc. The works in each of these particular chronological and geographical clusters of scholars arguably contain similarities and differences between and within themselves. Such similarities, differences, and relations need to be better explored, especially in the period after the seventh/thirteenth century.

In addition, we can find in the works of early and later scholars—especially after the commentary became the medium of choice—mention of clusters of scholars, sometimes organized around a chronological view from early masters to later scholars,⁶³ while at other times organized around inter-generational and inter-regional partisans of a particular opinion.⁶⁴ Sometimes this clustering indicates something of how our authors view their relationship to other scholars, while at others it might tell us something about how they view a particular opinion with regard to orthodoxy.

By constructing specific nexuses of texts—that is, categorizing a set of texts according to chronology, geography, topic, authors, etc.—and carefully studying the relationship between works within one set of connected texts (within one nexus) and between other sets of connected texts (with other text-nexuses) will broaden the scope of our understandings of the subjects discussed and the diversity of opinions and approaches to them. That is to say, one particular nexus of texts may include those not found in the particular nexus of texts that a given individual scholar might have interacted with in his own works, and we should be aware of how the presence or absence of a particular text or author's thought impacts that of another.⁶⁵

Perhaps studying these nexuses of scholars and their texts will produce a view of intellectual history that appears to be in a general decline, with occasional bursts of vibrancy, such that we find general patterns of broad foundational discussions followed by more and more restrictive discussions, as standard Orientalist narratives of decline propose with regard to law. That

63 Such as mentioning the opinion of al-Ash'arī, followed by al-Bāqillānī, then al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī, on to al-Rāzī, etc.

64 As discussed earlier, al-Sanūsī mentions an inter-generational and inter-geographical cluster of scholars that includes Ibn Abī Jamra, al-Qushayrī, Abū l-Walid b. Rushd, and al-Ghazālī, who all held the same opinion on the matter in question.

65 For example, the Indian theologian Mīr Zāhid (d. 1100/1689) had an important impact among scholars of the Indian sub-continent during his life and soon thereafter, but was lamentably unknown except to a few Egyptian scholars during the same time period and following generations. See Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 241.

is, we would begin with the era of the great *imāms* who founded schools of theology and those first few generations thereafter who dealt with the early foundational issues, perhaps forming an *uṣūl* of core proofs and methods (i.e., al-Ash'arī, al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī, al-Shahrastānī, al-Ghazālī, and so on). This era would then be followed by the important works of al-Rāzī and other seventh/thirteenth through ninth/fifteenth-century scholars, who, perhaps, wrote either monographs or commentaries, and dealt with more secondary issues, continuing the application of the core proofs and methods of earlier generations, while also introducing new issues and methods, especially in conversation with the philosophers.⁶⁶ At this time, we see the rise of commentary culture, which was previously just one possible medium, but in the aftermath of the Mongol invasions came to be considered the preferred format, as some have argued.⁶⁷

Other variables during the seventh/thirteenth through ninth/fifteenth centuries include differing regional dialects in classical Arabic, and even more important, variations in technical lexicons.⁶⁸ As the diversity of texts, terms, and ideas became more complex, ninth/fifteenth through nineteenth-century scholars provide gleams of insight and ingenuity, interspersed with efforts to preserve, teach, explain, and fine tune past theories, methods, and texts. This was an era of the *muḥaqqiqīn* or verifiers, as discussed by El-Rouayheb.⁶⁹ Vibrancy and originality here were interspersed throughout derivative and pedagogical passages, though the occasional epistle (*risāla*) may provide more insight to the patient researcher.

One problem with the above moderate decline-oriented view, however, is that, while probably correct from some perspectives, it ignores the existence of ongoing conversations over fundamental issues, conversations that extend from the foundational period until the turn of the twentieth century. It might be objected that merely continuing to discuss fundamental questions in and of itself does not equal vibrancy. This is arguably true, especially if the discussions are merely explanative, comparative, or transmissive. However, should the contributions of the likes of 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355) or some of the later Egyptian scholars mentioned previously, for example, introduce new (or previously ignored) variables, opinions, fine-tunings, and perspectives into the conversation—as I believe their contributions often do—it is arguable that

66 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 353.

67 See Spevack, *Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*, 31.

68 See Spevack, "Apples and Oranges", 174.

69 See El-Rouayheb, "Opening the Gate of Verification".

this would be evidence of an intellectual vibrancy that is so often ignored or assumed to be absent.⁷⁰

Another problem with the moderate decline-oriented view outlined above is that it also ignores a number of other variables, such as conversations that take place above the texts in a largely oral though simultaneously bookish scholarly culture. We can only detect hints of these conversations through deduction, and by broadening the scope of our texts to historical works which may not initially be considered repositories of theological doctrine and discourse,⁷¹ and by careful readings of the implications of *fatwā* collections that treat theological issues.

This above periodization (i.e., al-Ash'arī to al-Rāzī to al-Sanūsī to al-Bājūrī) also rests on a collection of frequently studied and taught texts that are extracted from introductory and mid-level *madrassa* curricula. It ignores the many more advanced texts still in manuscript libraries or localized printings, rarely studied in the western academy or in Muslim institutions of higher learning in the Muslim world today. One prominent example is the body of works by al-Siyālkūtī (d. 1067/1657); while certainly not forgotten, his vast corpus of works is little-known outside highly specialized *madrassa* curricula. Even when studied, his *hāshīya* on al-Taftāzānī's commentary on al-Nasafī is likely better-known than his other useful super-commentaries on a variety of theological and philosophical works.

Were the later Ash'arīs of Egypt and elsewhere a culture of thinkers lost in the particulars, technicalities, and subtleties, or did they continue to deal with the fundamentals, as the obligation of reflection (*wujūb al-naẓar*) would seem to imply. Were they arguing with ghosts from the past, engaged in mental gymnastics and the preservation of earlier discussions, or were there real catalysts (i.e., doubts, questions, confusions, etc.) from the conversations and life-experiences of scholars and educated laymen alike? It is worth considering that these later scholars did not merely transmit and explain the theological material of the past merely for preservation and without current application, as those who unquestioningly follow Ibn Khaldūn's view of theological history

70 Of course vibrancy and stagnancy are arguably somewhat subjective; we may not all value the same things. At minimum I am concerned with the risks of accepting as absolute fact that such an extreme decline occurred, as it often leads to ignoring entire generations of scholars, their works, and their intellectual contributions.

71 I am indebted to Himmet Taskomur of Harvard University whose comments and explanations in personal conversations helped me more fully realize this important feature of many historical works, whose scope often extends to multiple forms of history (intellectual history, cultural history, political history, etc.).

claim.⁷² Rather, al-Sanūsī's charge that many of the Muslims of his time were steeped in beliefs that he saw as heresies and innovations, coupled with his belief that every believer must be able to prove their faith rationally, indicates that he saw a society that needed to engage with the foundational and derived theological and philosophical questions that his works were meant to specifically address.

It is certainly still necessary to identify, study, and understand the many subtleties of Islamic theological and philosophical discourse throughout these text-nexuses. It is also useful to bring these contributions into the discourse on contemporary issues today, just as Mawlana Ali Thanvi did in his critique of modernity using first principles derived from al-Taftāzānī's commentary on al-Nasafi,⁷³ or as the Protestant theologian William Lane Craig did with early classical *kalām* and modern physics in his *Kalām Cosmological Argument* and other published articles and debates.⁷⁴ It is worth better understanding how later Ash'arī *kalām* receives and explains ideas like particles acting like waves, the agency of the observer in the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics,⁷⁵ and other contemporary issues that have implications both in the empirical realm and the dictates of Ash'arī rationality. While these questions admittedly go beyond the scope of the responsibilities of an intellectual historian, pondering them helps us better read and understand the premodern and early-modern scholars we are concerned with, to say nothing of the often-ignored study of post-1850 theological scholarship.

In closing, there is clear evidence of a continued vibrancy in the topics of ongoing conversations in the Egyptian and Maghrebi traditions, as well as in the traditions not discussed here, such as Ottoman and Mughal scholarship. These subtle contributions are worthy of careful study, keeping in mind the need for a comprehensive survey of the many connections between and within nexuses of texts not yet properly studied. While the periodization of the various clusters of scholars and texts offered above is useful, it can and should be revised and revisited as we continue our conversations on the later Ash'arī and other theological traditions.

72 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 353–54.

73 See Naeem, "A Traditional Islamic Response to the Rise of Modernism".

74 See Craig, *Kalām Cosmological Argument*.

75 See Harding, "Causality Then and Now".

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Putting Criticisms against al-Ghazālī in Perspective

New Materials on the Interface between Law, Rational Theology and Mysticism in Almoravid and Almohad al-Andalus (Ibn Rushd al-Jadd and al-Qurṭubī)

Xavier Casassas Canals and Delfina Serrano-Ruano

The reception of al-Ghazālī's thought in the Islamic West cannot be extricated from the spread and consolidation of Ash'arism in the region and hence from its intellectual history during the Almoravid and Almohad periods (last quarter of the 11th century–second half of the 13th century CE). Apart from advancing further in the cataloguing and reading of works produced by local followers of the school, a more accurate understanding of Western Ash'arism—provided we can use that expression as meaning something distinct from other contextual developments affecting the school—also demands an examination of its ideological neighbours and competitors and the charting of points of friction and coincidence among them all.

Al-Ghazālī's bid to revivify Islamic religious sciences, especially in the way it was presented in his *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, triggered a series of negative responses which escalated and led to the ban on reading or possessing any of his books, and to the public burnings of the *Iḥyā'* ordered in different cities of al-Andalus and the Far Maghrib by the Almoravids, which brought them very bad-press.¹ Though the criticisms focused on the *Iḥyā'*, the negative reaction against particular ideas contained in this specific work or against its methodology translated into an overall rejection of the man and his scholarly production on *kalām* and mysticism² which survived seamlessly in the mindsets of the

1 Al-Ghazālī's life and works have been subject to a number of revisionist approaches that stress the Avicennan roots of a rational religious thought distinct from both Ash'arism and Sufism (see references to Frank, Griffel, Treiger and Garden in the bibliography): it lies beyond the scope of this paper to assess their accuracy. This paper concentrates rather on perceptions about al-Ghazālī's doctrines in a given temporal and local setting with the primary aim of expanding knowledge about that setting, instead of verifying the faithfulness to their object of those perceptions. To the extent that interpretation of al-Ghazālī's thought is still open to debate, efforts directed at preserving the opinions of al-Ghazālī's pre-modern Muslim peers and inquiring into their contextual constraints can illuminate and further nuance contemporary readings, whilst alerting against the dangers of imposing the latter onto those medieval receptions.

2 Which did not prevent the scattered transmission, commentaries and abridgments of many of his works (e.g. *al-Basīṭ*, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, *Kitāb al-Wajīz*, *al-Iḥyā'*, *al-Risāla al-qudsiyya*, *Mizān al-'amal*, *al-Jawāhir*, *Minhāj al-'ābidīn*, *Kitāb al-arba'īn*,

mainstream religious scholars of the Naṣrid period.³ The latter appear to have been rather unaffected by previous attempts to rehabilitate al-Ghazālī's reputation. These had been motivated more by aspects of the ideological campaign of the Almohads to oust the Almoravids from power⁴ than by a commitment to lend full official support to pro-Ghazālīan Sufis.⁵

As we will see below, those scholars who in one way or another acted against al-Ghazālī appear to have had good reasons to do so; fanaticism and intellectual narrow-mindedness do not provide convincing arguments to explain the negative reception of al-Ghazālī's thought in Almoravid al-Andalus. Be that as it may, the ruling Almoravids and the scholars involved in their religious politics contributed to the creation of an atmosphere of suspicion and wariness in which it became tolerable to defame al-Ghazālī or harass local mystics.

Exceptions to this general *état d'esprit* were three Sufi-leaning legal scholars from Almería: al-Barjī (d. 509/1115), Ibn Ward (d. 540/1146) and Ibn al-Faṣīḥ (ca. first half of the 6th/12th century). They expressed their opposition to the measures against al-Ghazālī taken by the *qāḍī* of their hometown, whose advisory council they belonged to at the time. Al-Barjī issued a *fatwā* holding

Mishkāt al-arwār, al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ ma'ānī asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā and al-Mustaṣfā) in al-Andalus until the Christian conquest—as testified by the information collected in the HATA files—, and later on among Iberian Muslims under Christian rule—as pointed out by Harvey, *Muslims in Spain 1500 to 1614*, 157–59 and Casassas Canals, “Devoción y sufismo”. On the HATA files see Maribel Fierro, *History of Authors and Transmitters of al-Andalus (HATA)*, now accessible through the web page of the KOHEPOC ERC grant http://kohepocu.cchs.csic.es/register/to/hata_kohepocu/.

3 See Ibn Marzūq (710/1310–781/1389), *Musnad*, 255–56 where the author echoes a confidence the Naṣrid sultan of Granada Abū l-Walīd Ismā'īl II (who ruled between August 1359/Ramadan 760 and June 1360/Rajab 761) allegedly made to him. To wit, although the sultan held al-Ghazālī's legacy in high esteem, he could not show this publicly given the aversion of the *fuqahā'* of his council towards him. The Marinids, however, did not have any problem in connecting their rule with al-Ghazālī's legacy through recourse, among other methods, to the services of Ibn Marzūq himself, who was their court historian (See *Musnad*, 255–56). On the attitude towards Sufis and mystics in Naṣrid Granada, see also Guichard, *De la expansión árabe a la reconquista*, 242–44. For Sufism under the Marinids, see Nwyia, *Ibn 'Abbad de Ronda*, xi–xvi, xxviii–lx.

4 Nevill Barbour very accurately called it a “psychological war” in his “La guerra psicológica de los almohades contra los almorávides”.

5 See Ferhat, “L'organisation des soufis”, 1075. However, as pointed out by the same author (1076), the rise of the Almohads unquestionably brought about widespread acceptance of the science of Sufism as laid down by al-Ghazālī. For more on al-Ghazālī's following in al-Andalus and the Far Maghrib during the Almohad period see Urvoy, *El mundo de los ulemas andaluces*, 215–19; Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus”, 188–91, 197–98; Rodríguez Mediano, “Biografías almohades en el *Taṣawwuf* de al-Tādīlī”, and Marín, “Représentations de la sainteté au Maghreb”.

that whoever had ordered the burning of al-Ghazālī's works should receive a discretionary punishment and pay for the value of the books destroyed.⁶ The materials we examine in this paper show that other religious scholars with ascetic inclinations did clearly distinguish themselves from the so-called Sufis, but felt the need to step in and instill some moderation and objectivity in the excesses they felt had been committed against al-Ghazālī. We refer to Ibn Rushd al-Jadd (d. Cordoba 520/1126) and Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn Farḥ al-Qurṭubī (d. El Minya 671/1273). Consideration of these scholars' experience provides us with the opportunity to look at Western Ash'arism from without and from within, whilst it was receiving the impact of al-Ghazālī's works just before being hit by Ibn Tūmart's (d. 524/1130) doctrine on *tawḥīd*, and following decades of exposure to both processes, respectively.

Given his closeness to the Almoravids, for whom he performed as chief *qāḍī* of Cordoba, the case of Ibn Rushd is especially illustrative of the informal checks and balances developed by certain Andalusī '*ulama*' to ensure a modicum of good sense and discretion.⁷ The second figure is a reputed scholar of the late Almohad period⁸ about whom, his prestige notwithstanding—and which mainly derives from his authoritative commentary of the Qur'ān—little is known concerning either details of his life or his main scholarly and ideological coordinates. Examination of al-Qurṭubī's reaction towards the accusations levelled against al-Ghazālī by Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148), his stance towards other Andalusī mystics such as Ibn Barrajān (d. 536/1141), al-Uqlishī (d. 551/1156–57) and the more controversial Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931), his references to the "Sufis" and his positions on Ash'arīs, Mu'tazilīs, philosophers and the adherents of other theological trends, facilitate the reconstruction of a number of important lacunas in Andalusī religious and intellectual history. In what follows we inquire into al-Qurṭubī's position within the networks of both contemporary and preceding religious scholars and endeavour to answer the question as to whether or not, despite his early departure for the East, he can be considered a typical product of the Almohad educational project⁹—

6 See Serrano-Ruano, "Why did the Scholars of al-Andalus Distrust al-Ghazālī?", 137–39; *idem*, "Los almorávides y la teología aš'arī", 502–3, no. 29.

7 On the scholarly career of Ibn Rushd al-Jadd and his relationship with the Almoravids see Serrano-Ruano, "Ibn Rushd al-Jadd".

8 Not to be confused with the anti-Christian polemicist Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Umar b. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī (569/1173–657/1259).

9 That the Almohad revolution included an educational reform is shown by the establishment of a series of *madrasas* and by the creation of a special body of state agents, i.e. the *ṭalaba*, in

with its concern for theological anthropomorphism¹⁰ and its rejection of *taqlīd* and *ikhtilāf*.¹¹ Thereby we can also contribute to expanding our present—and still poor—knowledge of later Ash‘arism in the Islamic West, especially during the Almohad period, and the role played by the reception and discussion of al-Ghazālī’s most polemical ideas in its subsequent development.

1 The Reception of al-Ghazālī’s Thought and the Spread of Ash‘arism in Almoravid al-Andalus and the Far Maghrib¹²

Exploitation of the rich legal and bio-bibliographical literature produced in al-Andalus and the Far Maghrib from the 11th century CE onwards has highlighted the civilizing role played by the Almoravids and invalidated the stereotypical image of an army of unlearned and fanaticized north African Berbers who had gained control over a culturally predominant neighbour whose level of social and intellectual development was beyond the Almoravids’ capacity of assimilation, adaptation and interaction. According to this view,¹³ the Almoravid period was also one of religious intransigence and dire legalism, promoted by Mālikī *fuqahā’* moved by ambition and narrow intellectual interests and restricted to an uncritical adherence to the doctrine of Mālik (d. 179/796) and his disciples, confined to the study of the branches of law, and opposed to rationality and spirituality, the support those *fuqahā’* lent to the north Africans having had no other purpose than that of keeping or increasing their own privileges.

charge of disseminating and implementing official ideology. See Fricaud, “La place des *ṭalaba* dans la société almohade”.

10 See Serrano-Ruano, “¿Por qué llamaron los almohades antropomorfistas a los almorávides?”

11 On opposition to both *taqlīd* (unquestioned imitation of past legal and theological authorities and adherence to a given legal school other than official religious ideology) and *ikhtilāf* (divergence of opinions) in Almohad religious policies, see Fierro, “La religión” and “The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs”.

12 Apart from the above mentioned references, and unless indicated otherwise, this section elaborates on materials already examined in Serrano-Ruano, “Later Ash‘arism in the Islamic West”, 517–27; *idem*, “La diffusion de l’*aš‘arisme* et la réforme du credo malikite à l’époque almoravide: Ibn Rušd al-Ġadd, Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī et le qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ”; *idem*, “Sufi Practices *versus* *fiqh*-Oriented Orthodoxy in the Pre-Modern Islamic West”.

13 Spread by pro-Almohad historians like Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, the anonymous author of *al-Ḥulal al-mawshīyya*, ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, al-Baydhaq and Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt (on whose works see M.J. Viguera, “Historiografía”), and fomented by some al-Andalus specialists such as Dozy or García Gómez.

We now proceed to challenge that image, drawing on a series of incursions into the works of a number of scholars of the period including the aforementioned Ibn Rushd al-Jadd—not to be confused with his famous grandson Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafīd or Averroes (d. 595/1198)—, Ibn Ḥamdīn (d. 508/1114), Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ b. Mūsā (d. 544/1149), and Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī, all of whom combined adherence to the Mālikī school of law with Ash‘arism.¹⁴ Ash‘arism rather than Mālikism appears to have determined their support of Almoravid legitimacy as well as their position towards Sufism in general and al-Ghazālī’s ideas in particular, the latter being, together with the impact of Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine, a determining aspect of the religious and intellectual landscape of late Almoravid al-Andalus and the Far Maghrib. As has already been pointed out, this is a context in which Ash‘arism, Mālikism, mysticism and religious legitimacy to exert political power are closely interconnected and cannot be dealt with separately.

Rather than having merely tolerated *kalām* and its practitioners, the Almoravids appear to have implemented a conscious policy of promotion, most likely inspired by Abū ‘Imrān al-Fāsī, (d. 430/1039),¹⁵ a disciple of the chief Ash‘arite authority for North African scholars, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013). Al-Fāsī played a symbolic role in the movement’s foundational narrative by means of which its emergence was connected with Sunni orthodoxy as represented by Mālikism and Ash‘arism, and by Qayrawān, Abū ‘Imrān’s place of residence and one of the most prestigious seats of Islamic learning at that time.¹⁶

Almoravid support of Ash‘arism translated into a series of initiatives, the first of which was public acknowledgement of the school’s doctrine. The selected procedure involved the *amīr* or one of his representatives and the most prominent religious scholar of the moment, Ibn Rushd al-Jadd. Legal advice was requested from him concerning the status of Ash‘arite theologians *vis-à-vis* those who refused to accept them as sound religious authorities. The very wording of the question anticipated the positive tone of the *muftī*’s answer towards the followers of al-Ash‘arī: they are right because they are familiar with the principles (*uṣūl*) of religious beliefs and with the use of the logical categories of obligatory, possible and impossible to describe God. Given that knowledge of the fundamentals of Islamic faith and law is essential to understand the textual and rational arguments upholding sound belief, to clarify ambiguities, to solve

14 Ibn Rushd and Ibn Ḥamdīn were of the same age whereas both ‘Iyāḍ—who studied directly with the two of them—and Ibn al-‘Arabī, belong to the generation of their disciples. Moreover, ‘Iyāḍ attended the lessons given by Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī during the latter’s stay in Ceuta on his way back to al-Andalus from the East.

15 Date of death according to *Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik* by Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ.

16 See Idris, “Essai”, 131–35; Ould-Mohamed Baba, “Le statut du personnage de Ġawhar”.

uncertainties and to refute heretic and deviant opinions, their authority must be given precedence over that of the average *fuqahā'*, since the branches (i.e. rituals and applied law) cannot be known without command of the principles. Those who refuse to acknowledge the authority of the Ash'arites are stupid and ignorant. Those who insult them and level unfounded accusations against them are evil doers. They must be invited to retract, but if they refuse they must be punished until they repent.¹⁷

From a substantial point of view, promotion of Ash'arism during the Almoravid period focused on the eradication of both anthropomorphism—declared to be the most evil consequence of theological literalism—and esoteric interpretation of the sacred texts, Ash'arism being thus propounded as the ideal middle term between the two. Refutations of both anthropomorphism and Bāṭinism, presented as mutually antithetical, were written by Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (d. 521/1127), and Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī. Unlike Ibn al-'Arabī, however, al-Baṭalyawsī seems to have operated rather independently from the Almoravids and the Mālikī establishment.

Discussions about the proper interpretation of God's descriptions transmitted in the sacred texts did not only address scholarly circles but concentrated too on purging the common believer's mind of corporealism and of the interpretive excesses of the esotericists. This gave rise to a series of new professions of faith among which the *'aqīda* of Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ became rather popular.¹⁸ To judge from the testimony of Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī, the threat these *'aqīdas* were meant to prevent lay within Mālikīs' own ranks where theological literalism had allegedly wreaked havoc, as was manifest in the opening chapters of Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī's (d. 386/996) *Risāla*, now deemed to border too closely on anthropomorphism to continue to be regarded as the Mālikī profession of faith par excellence.

By the first half of the 12th century CE, most local Mālikī-Ash'arī scholars had come to accept the existence of a superior class of believers (i.e. *al-ṣāliḥīn*, *al-muttaqīn*, *awliyā' Allāh*) who had reached knowledge about God (*ma'rifa bi-Llāh ta'ālā*) thanks to their extraordinary piety, and their capacity to perform miracles (*karāmāt*). In a long *fatwā* by Ibn Rushd those "saints" were neatly distinguished from prophets; acceptance of the possibility that God may alter the natural course of events for saints' miracles to take place, the *muftī* argued, does not put saints and prophets on an equal footing since prophets,

17 See Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwā*, 2:802–5, 943–45 and 1060–61.

18 That is to say, the chapter on *shahāda* or testimony of faith in Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's *al-I'lām bi-ḥudūd qawā'id al-islām*.

contrary to saints, have knowledge of the Unseen (*ʿilm al-ghayb*).¹⁹ Yet a widely accepted and authoritative text such as al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* identified Sufis with saints.²⁰ Meanwhile, contemporary political circumstances in al-Andalus and the Maghrib led some of the aforementioned scholars to suspect that mystics—a “hadith-oriented ‘Sunni underground’ largely maintained by Sufis”, to borrow Vincent Cornell's characterization—were dangerously mobilizing a significant part of discontent with the Almoravids.²¹

In his *Muqaddimāt*, Abū l-Walīd Ibn Rushd al-Jadd treats the relationship between knowledge and deeds in the context of his apology of Ashʿarism against Muʿtazilism and Mālikī literalism. For Ibn Rushd, the first obligation of the person legally responsible (*mukallaf*) is to learn (*tafaqquh*) the prescriptions of the sacred law, fulfilment of which is mandatory, to reflect on the revealed truths and be able to find the relevant proofs and indications (*al-naẓar wa-l-istidlāl*) in the sacred texts. Ibn Rushd preserves the possibility of reaching certainty about God's existence and the need to obey His commands without learning and reasoning, whereby these intellectual efforts are not considered a pre-requisite of valid faith. Yet the faith of s/he who has knowledge about God (*martabat man āmana bi-Llāh wa-ʿalimahu*), he declares, is better (*arfaʿ*) than that of s/he who lacks that knowledge. The primacy of the obligation to understand by rational means the need to believe in God and obey His commands had already been established by Ashʿarī scholars such as al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085).²² However, Ibn Rushd does not specify his source. He is more concerned with showing that, in this particular respect, he was ready to overcome the “conformism” of his most important Mālikī-Ashʿarī predecessor in al-Andalus, Abū l-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081), who had allegedly refused to uphold that obligation to avoid imposing upon certain believers something that was

19 See Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwā*, 1:574–85.

20 See Serrano-Ruano, “Why did the scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazālī?”, 141, note 20.

21 The project mentioned in the acknowledgments at the end of this article is devoted to research on Andalusī *ḥadīth* scholars such as al-Qurṭubī, and to establishing whether or not and to what point those of them who lived in the transition period between the Almoravids and the Almohads fitted into Cornell's characterization (e.g. were they self-identified “Sufis”, just ascetics or non-Sufi mystics? Were they strict followers of Almohadism?, etc.).

22 See Frank, “Knowledge and *taqlīd*”, 45 and note 21. Al-Ghazālī did not deny salvation to voluntary or self-indulging ignorant believers either, though in matters of creed he rejected the possibility of religious scholars merely sticking to the opinions of earlier religious authorities (*taqlīd*). See Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver*, 72, drawing on Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 45. When discussing that neglecting the duty to engage with the fundamentals of religion is tantamount to unbelief, Ibn Rushd identifies al-Bukhārī and al-Bāqillānī as possible—and involuntary—sources of that—in his view mistaken—conclusion. See Ibn Rushd, *Muqaddimāt*, 1:57–59.

beyond their capacities.²³ For the textual history of Ash'arism in al-Andalus, this specific part of Ibn Rushd's treatment of *taklīf* has the added value of preserving a record of doctrines that would otherwise have been lost for us, as al-Bājī's works on *kalām* are not extant.

No reference is made here to sources of knowledge other than the intellect. However, it is evident that Ibn Rushd distinguishes between a) being certain of God's existence and the obligation to obey Him (*yaqīn*); b) identifying and learning the relevant textual arguments and reflecting about their meaning (*tafaqquh*; *al-naẓar wa-l-istidlāl*), and c) knowledge about God (*ilm/ma'rifa bi-Llāh ta'ālā*), the latter including the first two, plus avoidance of sins and bad deeds. With respect to "learning", "reflecting" and "finding indications" which we have understood in the sense of intellectual effort, Ibn Rushd makes a differentiation between the basics and the method of the *mutakallimūn*, lay believers being concerned only about the first type. The first type is available to those endowed with cognitive intelligence (*ʿaql*), which he defines as immediate or "necessary" knowledge.

Ibn Rushd's commitment to learning and reasoning could hardly have been compatible with the view that gave priority to the performance of rituals and good deeds over intellectual knowledge in the definition of the quality of faith and the path towards knowledge about and nearness to God. The attribution of that view to al-Ghazālī's influence on certain groups of Sufis is evident in the criticisms of Ibn Ḥamdīn, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ and Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī.²⁴ Yet Ibn Rushd refuses to pronounce himself categorically on that question. In his opinion, it all depends on the particular believer's circumstances and the aim of either performing ritual obligations or acquiring knowledge.²⁵ Be that as it may, Ibn Rushd is said to have held in favour of burning al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, as did his student, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, and his colleague, Ibn Ḥamdīn. Precise details about Ibn Rushd's alleged censure of al-Ghazālī are lacking.²⁶ What is clear is that he was well acquainted with a tract written by a certain Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Khalaf b. Mūsā al-Anṣārī Ibn al-Ilbīrī (d. 537/1142) under the title of *Tadhyl*

23 See Ibn Rushd, *al-Muqaddimāt*, 1:9–62. Also see Serrano-Ruano, "Entre almorávides y almohades".

24 On the former see below, reference to Kenneth Garden's dissertation. On the rest see Serrano-Ruano "Why did the scholars of al-Andalus distrust al-Ghazālī?", p. 151; *idem*, "Iyāḍ b. Mūsā", *BA*, 6:427–28.

25 Ibn Rushd, *Muqaddimāt*, 1:51.

26 The problem posed by the misattribution to Ibn Rushd al-Jadd of a *fatwā* dealing with al-Ghazālī's identification between saints (*awlīyā' Allāh*) and Sufis and its consequences are explained in detail in Serrano-Ruano, "Sufi Practices versus *fiqh*-Oriented Orthodoxy in the Pre-Modern Islamic West", section 2.4., note 53.

(“Appendix”). This tract comprised a refutation of a *fatwā* issued by the chief *qāḍī* of Cordoba, Ibn Ḥamdīn, on the question of whether the essence of wine is altered after being transformed into vinegar (*takhallalat*), which Ibn al-Ilbīrī found to be very deficient where resort to rational arguments (*al-adilla al-aqliyya*) was concerned.²⁷ This Ibn Ḥamdīn appears to be the same scholar who composed a refutation of al-Ghazālī, which we will deal with later on, and saw to it that his books were burned in Cordoba.

According to Ibn Rushd, after being approached by Ibn al-Ilbīrī to secure his support, he decided to side with Ibn Ḥamdīn, whose methodology Ibn Rushd found to be irreproachable (*su'ila al-faqīh al-qāḍī Abū Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ḥamdīn ...fa-qjāba ilā dhālik—waffaqahu Llāh bi-jawāb muḥkam al-nizām jazl al-maqāl istadalla li-qawlihi fihi bi-āy min al-Qur'an wa-sunan marwiyya fi l-āthār wa-tamaththala fi dhālik bi-gharīb min al-ash'ār*),²⁸ recommending Ibn al-Ilbīrī to concentrate his efforts on correcting the many errors he himself had incurred in his *Tadhyil* when “refuting al-Ghazālī regarding the question of the soul” (*raddihi 'alā l-Ghazālī fi mas'alat al-rūḥ*). However, and in view of Ibn al-Ilbīrī's stubbornness and reluctance to acknowledge his own mistakes, Ibn Rushd found himself forced to write a critical review of the “Appendix”, rebuking point by point Ibn al-Ilbīrī's arguments against Ibn Ḥamdīn.²⁹

... And among [the arguments raised by Ibn al-Ilbīrī] is the following: “if one thing is adjoined (*inḍāfa*) to a similar thing, it grows provided that both are describable (*mawṣūfayn*) objects, so that he used the term ‘thing’ (*aṭlaqa lafẓ al-shay'*) in the sense of something having the capacity to grow whereas [that] ‘thing’ may apply to [both] the Pre-existent—Exalted—and to the temporally existent (*yanṭaliq 'alā l-qadīm—ta'ālā—wa-'alā*

27 See Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwā*, 1:418–19.

28 See Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwā*, 1:418. Over time the relationship between Ibn Ḥamdīn and Ibn Rushd al-Jadd deteriorated to such a degree that their rivalry was “inherited” by their relatives and descendants (See Serrano-Ruano, “Ibn Rushd al-Jadd”, 301–6, 310). In the text in *Fatāwā Ibn Rushd*, Ibn Ḥamdīn is referred to as *qāḍī* and Ibn Rushd as “*al-faqīh al-imām al-hāfiẓ*”. This might indicate that the latter had not yet been appointed chief *qāḍī* of Cordoba, because after this nomination, he used to be referred as such, even after he resigned from the position. There is some ground for speculation then, that Ibn Rushd's endorsement of Ibn Ḥamdīn's *fatwā* was not only a matter of scholarly consistency but part of a strategy to enter the Cordoban *shūrā*—presided by the city's *qāḍī*. The latter possibility is all the more likely given Ibn Rushd al-Jadd's alleged lack of family connections with the Cordoban Arab aristocracy to which the Banū Ḥamdīn did rather belong.

29 See Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwā*, 1:418–45. Cf. Garden, *Al-Ghazālī's Contested Revival*, 185–86. Also see Marín “En los márgenes de la ley”, 309–10, and, quoting Marín, De la Puente, “El vinagre en las fuentes jurídicas mālikies”, 257–58.

l-muḥdath). [Yet Ibn al-Ilbīrī's] words, when taken in a literal and a general sense, are constitutive of plain unbelief (*kufr ṣarīḥ*) [for they imply that created things can be joined to God and that whenever this happens, He grows!].³⁰ Indeed, for saying something similar [Ibn Rushd points out], he had declared al-Ghazālī an infidel (*kaffara l-Ghazālī*) concerning the question of the soul (*fī mas'alat al-rūḥ*). To wit, al-Ghazālī had said: "every existent free of quantity and measures (*kull mawjūd munazzah 'an al-kammiyya wa-l-maqādīr*), belongs to the domain of [divine] command [i.e. that which is without time and matter; the suprasensible intelligible world] (*'ālam al-amr*) [alone]";³⁰ a maxim having led him [i.e. Ibn al-Ilbīrī] to claim the following: "had he [i.e. al-Ghazālī] wanted to point to a certain created thing (*shay'an min al-muḥdathāt*) he should have said instead: 'every created existent (*kull mawjūd muḥdath*) free of quantity and measures belongs to the domain of [divine] command". Therefore, by virtue of the obligation he had imposed upon al-Ghazālī, the following must be pointed out to him: "If you also wanted to refer to a certain created thing, you should have said [instead]: 'If one *created* thing is adjoined to a similar thing, it grows provided that both are describable objects'. To talk authoritatively (*fa-law ḥaṣḥala kalāmuhu*) he should rather have guarded himself against imposing upon al-Ghazālī the obligation to say that 'if one *created* thing is adjoined to a similar thing, it grows provided that both are describable objects'. For what an obvious stupidity and nonsense it is to guard oneself against that which is not imposed, but by the error of [requiring the need to] specify that [this is so] 'if both are describable objects', in order to remove the possibility of an increase in the attributes (*namā' al-ṣifāt*) after they come into contact with each other, instead of taking precautions against the unbelief of imposing upon [al-Ghazālī] the obligation to bind the thing with the created [world] (*bi-an yuqayyida l-shay' bi-l-muḥdath*)... This is the correct method of argument against him on this particular question".³¹

Ibn Rushd thus makes no secret of his disdain for Ibn al-Ilbīrī's arguments against al-Ghazālī's dictum on the soul, though he appears to be less concerned with freeing the latter from the charge of infidelity than with unmasking Ibn al-Ilbīrī's incompetence and the danger of pronouncing such serious

30 On this term see Treiger, *Inspired knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 17.

31 See Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwā*, 1:439–40. We thank the anonymous readers of this chapter for their criticisms, which have proved especially useful regarding the interpretation of this passage.

accusations as *kufī* against fellow Muslims. Likewise, Ibn Rushd keenly dismantled Ibn al-Ilbīrī's pretensions to use the hostile atmosphere against al-Ghazālī to stand out from his masters as a *kalām* expert.

Concerning the question of whether bad deeds and sins have the capacity to corrupt faith to the point of unbelief, as could be expected from a follower of Ash'arism, Ibn Rushd holds that acts of disobedience do not necessarily entail eternal condemnation, for this occurs only in the absence of repentance. Conversely, good deeds do not yield an increase in the essence of faith but in the degree of its certainty (*al-yaqīn fī l-īmān*) and remoteness from the possibility that doubts may enter into it. "Faith is more excellent", he declares, "when accompanied by certainty and strength". He mentions that according to Mālik b. Anas only the possibility that faith be improved through good deeds must be given credit since it is the only one mentioned in the Qur'ān. Likely aiming at overcoming the literalism implicit in Mālik's dictum, he quotes an alternative tradition reporting that, in his deathbed, Mālik was asked the question a last time and that, on such a transcendental situation, he declared that after having thoroughly reflected on the issue, he had to conclude that everything liable to increase is subject to decrease as well. Therefore, if the Qur'ān mentions that faith increases with good deeds, it must be assumed that the contrary—i.e. it decreases as a result of sins—is also true.³²

Ibn Ḥamdīn, Abū Bakr al-Ṭurtūshī (d. 520/1126), Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ b. Mūsā and Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī clearly operated from the perception that certain forms of Sufism represented a potentially disrupting force. They all blamed al-Ghazālī for the risk of syncretism involved in some of his most controversial doctrines but also for fostering extremist Sufism and antinomianism. They accused the Sufis—or rather, the most radical among them—of claiming that access to "the secrets of the divinity", the "unveiling of the truth" and prophecy could be reached through cultivating the science of practice (*mu'āmala*), "reform of the character, discipline of the soul and mastery of one's appetites".³³

32 See *al-Muqaddimāt al-mumahhidāt*, 1:9–62. The Ash'arīs upheld the theory of the growth and decrease of faith as far as degrees of perfection brought to it by good deeds was concerned. To put it another way, they sided with the Māturīdīs and the Ḥanafīs in their belief in the immutability of the nucleus of faith, but agreed with the Ḥanbalīs that good works can bring faith to various degrees of perfection. See Gardet, "Īmān", *EI*², section IV, question no. 1.

33 See Garden, *Al-Ghazālī's Contested Revival*, 76–143, 166, 171, 175, 181; Fierro, *El libro de las novedades y de las innovaciones*, 59–60, 61–64, and 85–86; Serrano-Ruano, "'Iyāḍ b. Mūsā", *BA*, 6:427–28.

The case of Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī is particularly relevant as he had studied directly under al-Ghazālī and brought his books to the West,³⁴ contributing to the assimilation of his master's thought by his many disciples. Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching was, according to Dominique Urvoy, instrumental for the consolidation of *kalām*, and the remarkable progress of philosophy and mysticism observed over the same period due to the adoption of Aristotelian logic and much of the Neoplatonic metaphysics which al-Ghazālī had borrowed from Ibn Sīnā and other thinkers to fight them on their own turf.³⁵ Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's aforementioned profession of faith testifies to the progressive dissemination of Ash'arism in that it resorts to the logical categories of the obligatory (*wājib*) and the impossible (*mustaḥīl*) to define God's nature and attributes. However, the few known philosophers or supporters of philosophy of the Almoravid period (e.g., Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and Ibn Bājja) did not enjoy the advantageous position reached by the Mālikī *mutakallimūn*. Mālik b. Wuhayb (Seville 453/1061–Marrakech 525/1130) is an exception to this remark, but the influence he managed to exert with 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshufin (d. 538/1143) came at the cost of downplaying, if not hiding, his interest for the profane sciences.

The relationship of these scholars with the Almoravids was not perfect all the time, but they either served as *qāḍīs* and preachers for them, or issued *fatwās* endorsing or recommending the adoption of relevant political decisions, amongst which were the orders to ban al-Ghazālī's books, though these *fatwās* in particular have not been preserved. Whatever reasons prompted the Almoravids to proceed against al-Ghazālī, they seem to have been grounded in something far more complex than obscurantism and intransigence, and to have been closely related with the above criticisms—their fairness regarding al-Ghazālī's real intentions and the quality of his religious and intellectual endeavour lie beyond the scope of our analysis—on the basis of a shared Ash'arī epistemology sustaining the primacy of intellectual knowledge over good

34 E.g. *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya* and *al-Qisṭas*, apart from the *Iḥyā'*. Curiously, the credit of being the main transmitter of al-Ghazālī's works translated into the inclusion of his name, immediately after that of his master and before that of Ibn Ḥirzihim/Ḥirazm, in the "mystical genealogies" of a series of Maghribī Sufis, a problematic filiation already called into question by Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Fāsī (d. 1109/1698) on the grounds that the transmission between al-Ghazālī and Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī was limited to the traditional religious sciences (*'ilm al-zāhir*). See Nwyia, *Ibn 'Abbad de Ronda* (1332–1390), xxxviii–xl, and note 1 of page xl.

35 See Urvoy, *El mundo de los ulemas andaluces*, 144, 196, 198–201; *idem*, *Pensers d'al-Andalus*, 168, though the fully fledged assimilation of Aristotelian logic and the definitive synthesis between *falsafa* and *kalām* was brought about by al-Rāzī, as Ayman Shihadeh argued in "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī".

deeds, and hence the authority of traditional religious scholars, and Almoravid legitimacy to exert political power.

The association between challenging established political authority and claims that prophecy could be reached through asceticism and the performance of good deeds³⁶ exacerbated apprehensions and created an environment in which Ibn al-'Arīf (d. 536/1141) and Ibn Barraġān—two mystics who had gathered a large following among both the populace and the learned classes—were considered suspect and summoned to Marrakech, the capital of the empire. They both died in obscure circumstances immediately afterwards, the former during his trip back to al-Andalus, and Ibn Barraġān, who was already known by the sobriquet of the “Ghazālī of al-Andalus”, while confined in prison. Neither of them appears to have ever claimed prophecy or aimed at getting rid of Almoravid authority.³⁷ When a real political alternative materialized both in the leader of the Almohad movement and in Ibn Qaṣī (d. 546/1151), the Almoravids were too weakened to face it in any effective manner. Ibn Tūmart preached the need to “enjoin good and forbid evil,” subsequently proclaiming himself the infallible *mahdī* (*al-mahdī al-ma'ṣūm*) in possession of “supreme knowledge about God” (*ma'rifa bi-Llāh*) and heir of the station of Prophecy (*wārith maqām al-nubuwwa*).³⁸ As for Ibn Qaṣī, he led (*imām*) a Sufi movement (the *murīdūn*) that took control of the Gharb al-Andalus until he relinquished power to Ibn Tūmart, eventually being assassinated by his own followers. 'Alī b. Yūsuf's attempt to curb Almohad ideological pressure by presenting himself as a saint (*walī Llāh*) as well was to no avail and by the second half of the twelfth century CE most of the former Almoravid empire had fallen in the hands of Ibn Tūmart's follower and new leader of his movement, 'Abd al-Mu'min.

In view of the preceding considerations, it would be tempting to qualify Western Muslim scholars' antipathy towards the *Ihyā'* as the expression of a conflict between pro-Almoravid *fuqahā'*-*mutakallimūn* on the one hand, and pro-Almohad Sufi-traditionists on the other. Yet well-known Mālikī *uṣūlīs* including the aforementioned Qāḍī Ibn Ward held against the burning of

36 For historical examples of rebellions against the established government initiated by a claim of having attained prophethood, see Fierro, “Polemic”, 245–47. For a later case see Cornell, “*Faqīh* versus *Faqīr* in Marinid Morocco”, 211–12.

37 Accounts of the circumstances of Ibn al-'Arīf's and Ibn Barraġān's summons to Marrakech and subsequent deaths in the available sources were recently submitted to a thorough review by Bellver in “Al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus”.

38 The quasi-prophetic character of Ibn Tūmart's preaching is clearly expressed in a letter drafted in the times of the Almohad caliph Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf (who ruled between 558/1163–580/1184). See Fierro, “Sobre monedas de época almohade”, 467, quoting 'Azzāwī, *Rasā'il*, 1:130, no. 27.

al-Ghazālī's books ordered by 'Alī b. Yūsuf and his son Tāshufīn (d. 539/1145). Further, Ibn Tūmart's own theological alignment, as will subsequently be shown, renders the above characterization problematic as well. Be that as it may, objections or open opposition to al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* were circumstances that Ibn Tūmart and his followers knew well how to use to their advantage.

2 Almohad Theology and the Manipulation of Almoravid Religious Politics

A number of modern students of Ibn Tūmart—e.g., A. Bel, R. Basset, H.R. Idris, W.M. Watt, D. Urvoy and F. Griffel—consider him an Ash'arite thinker, as did some pre-modern Muslim historians including Ibn Abī Zar' and al-Subkī. In fact, he studied under the Ash'arite theologians Abū Bakr al-Shāshī and Mubārak Ibn 'Abd al-Jabbār during his stay in the East. According to Ibn Khaldūn, however, he occupied a middle position between Ash'arism and Shī'ism, whereas for Ibn Taymiyya, both philosophy and Ismā'īlism had merged in his doctrines.³⁹

Scholars have tried to tackle the complexities of Ibn Tūmart's theological system and its apparent internal contradictions from different points of view. According to Dominique Urvoy, despite being made up of disparate elements (stemming from Ibn Tūmart's native Berber-Mašmūda and Khārijī-Ibāḍī milieu, his scholarly journeys to al-Andalus and to the East, and his personal intellectual constitution), Almohad theology consists of a radical but innovative and internally coherent system of remarkable density. Its apparent inconsistencies can be explained in the three-dimensional character—i.e. religious ideology, social reform, and system of government—of a movement which, however extreme it may have been at times, was not exceptional in resorting to violence in order to prevail.⁴⁰ Vincent Cornell stresses that Ibn Tūmart's writings and statements are linked by a “moral imperative to action on the part of each individual believer” in which (a) action must be preceded by understanding and knowing the fundamental principles of Islamic faith and law (i.e. Qur'ān, recurrent *ḥadīth*, and the consensus of the Companions), and (b) understanding and knowing are mandatory for all those endowed with full

39 See Urvoy, “La pensée d'Ibn Tūmart”.

40 See Urvoy, “La pensée d'Ibn Tūmart”, 20, 30. For more information on the Almohads' frequent resort to the death penalty against their subjects and their punishment with death of conducts that were not subject to that penalty under Sunni *fiqh* (e.g., failing to learn by heart the Almohad profession of faith or missing the canonic prayers), see Fierro, “Doctrina y prácticas jurídicas bajo los almohades”, 911–14.

mental capacity (*‘uqalā’*), whether they are learned or lay Muslims. These ideas are embodied in the call to implement the principle of enjoining good and forbidding evil. Disobedience, but also equivocation and omission of that duty, amount to infidelity (*kufṛ*).⁴¹ According to Frank Griffel, Ibn Tūmart’s teachings were influenced by al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī specially as far as divine creation and predetermination are concerned.⁴²

Another fact to be taken into account is the progressive assimilation of different ideas and tendencies experienced by Ibn Tūmart and his successors and the need to accommodate different audiences and contexts (e.g. illiterate and learned Muslims, Andalusī and Maghribī, Arabophones and Berberophones, etc.).⁴³ Ibn Tūmart’s “spiritual guide” (*Murshida*), for instance, reflects an eventual surrender to the realization that the masses,—even though they possess full mental capacity and, hence, responsibility (*taklīf*)—are unable to grasp the subtleties of Almohad theology; in consequence, their obligation was reduced to the sole memorizing of a simpler adapted version of the Almohad credo.⁴⁴

Certainly, the radical character of some of his ideas or the dimension they adopted when put into practice (e.g., the suppression of the *dhimma* status with the ensuing obligation to choose between conversion to Islam or death, or the declaration of infidelity (*takfīr*) for all those who did not adhere to the Almohad creed) would seem to rule out Ibn Tūmart’s adherence to Ash‘arism. However, contemporary sources appear to indicate that he identified himself as an Ash‘arī, or was considered as such by his contemporaries. Indeed, in a *fatwā* addressed to Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, the petitioner asked about a group of self defined Ash‘arīs who were claiming that faith was not complete without learning the science of the fundamentals of religion (*‘ilm al-uṣūl*). So far, the *fatwā* contains nothing fundamentally inconsistent with Ibn Rushd’s own view, as stated above. However, the petitioner’s remark that the above-mentioned group of Ash‘arīs considered that learning the *uṣūl* was mandatory for both lay and learned believers, and in particular that they considered those who

41 See Cornell, “Understanding is the Mother of Ability”.

42 See *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, 77–81.

43 See Urvoy, “La pensée”, 12–4; *idem*, “Les professions de foi d’Ibn Tūmart”; Fierro, “Las genealogías de ‘Abd al-Mu‘min”.

44 See Urvoy, “La pensée”, 31 referring to the second *Murshida*. Henry Laoust, however, considers only the first *Murshida* to be a simplified, ready-for-the-masses version of the *‘aqīda*, contrary to the longer *Murshida* 11. See Laoust, “Une fetwā d’Ibn Taymiyya sur Ibn Tūmart”, 161. The *‘Aqīda* and the two *Murshidas* were edited by J.-D. Luciani in *Le Livre de Mohammed Ibn Tūmert*, 229–38; 240–41 (*Murshida* 1) and 241–42 (*Murshida* 11) respectively. A longer version of the latter text was published by Goldziher in “Die Bekenntnisformeln der Almohaden”, 168–70. See Laoust, “Une fetwā”, 161–62.

refused to accept their position⁴⁵ to be infidels, takes us to the leader of the Almohad movement—with whom Ibn Rushd was well acquainted⁴⁶—and his entourage. In view of such claims the *muftī* adopted a defensive and restrictive position that might have well been used by Almohad propagandists to fabricate the well known characterization of Almoravid jurists as the declared enemies of *kalām* and stubborn supporters of *taqlīd*. Ibn Rushd drew back from his former praise of *uṣūl al-dīn wa-l-fiqh* methodology as the best means to protect the dominant Mālikī orthodoxy from internal and external threats, and stated that the above claims were not in conformity with Ash‘arism nor could they be traced back to any Ash‘arī authority.⁴⁷ The same scholar who had held for punishing recalcitrant opponents of Ash‘arism had to declare it forbidden—under the threat of punishment—for lay believers to read books on the subject for fear that they would lose their faith. For the learned, in their turn, he fixed a narrow limit allowing them to approach *kalām* on the condition that they were guided by a master well versed in the discipline and the dangers of its misuse.⁴⁸

In their attempts to neutralize Ibn Tūmart’s demands, the scholars under the sway of the Almoravids thus fell into his trap and handed him on a plate a series of arguments that made it possible to incriminate them all—scholars and rulers—on the grounds of their alleged aversion to *kalām*. Discrediting the Almoravids and the Mālikī *fuqahā’* with the arguments the latter had used to oppose Mālikī literalists and radical Sufis, and devising a plausible alternative to them within the legitimacy frame of Ash‘arism must have represented a great challenge. For the endeavour to succeed it was accordingly necessary to take a radical turn and administer generous doses of manipulation.

A scheme was concocted from the measures proposed by Ibn Rushd and some of his contemporaries in order to prevent unrestricted participation in the unveiling of mysteries that only experts in this “enigmatic and remote method of exegesis” (*tilka al-ṭarīqa al-ghāmiḍa al-ba’ida*)⁴⁹ could unravel. These measures, duly taken out of context, were combined with the rejection of al-Ghazālī and Almoravids’ going along with the mere promotion of a non-literalist profession of faith instead of imposing it on their subjects by force. The blend yielded a pillar of Almohad legitimacy, to wit, the imperative to wage *jihād* against the Almoravids on account of the infidelity they had fallen

45 Claiming that “ignoring the science of the fundamentals can lead [the believer] to deprive God of His attributes (*ta’ṭīl*) and to neglect the fulfillment of religious duties”.

46 See Serrano-Ruano and Forcada, “Mālik b. Wuhayb”, *BA*, 5:604–6, and Serrano-Ruano, “Entre almorávides y almohades”.

47 Which is not fully accurate, as he has to acknowledge in his *Muqaddimāt*, 1:57–58.

48 See Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwā*, 2:966–72.

49 See Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwā*, 2:972.

into for having contributed, by sin of omission, to the spreading of anthropomorphism in their dominions.⁵⁰

With all these ingredients, Ibn Tūmart and his heirs appear to have succeeded in creating a smoke screen behind which they might well have spared themselves, at least until they managed to consolidate their power, having to argue their positions more elaborately, and running the risk that the public they were directed at might find them too innovative or too extreme.

Be that as it may, Almohad theology—all its originality and consistency with a pre-established programme of spiritual, social, and political reform notwithstanding—cannot be approached as an endeavour to “fill the gap of the Almoravids’ alleged disdain of dogmatics” any longer. Rather, our present knowledge about the activity of Ash‘arite scholars during the Almoravid period and the rulers’ involvement therein calls for a reconsideration of Almohad theology as an endeavour to go beyond the bold defence of the need to learn and reason the fundamental principles of Islamic faith championed by scholars such as Ibn Rushd al-Jadd.

3 Devotion, Rational Theology and Mysticism in Almohad al-Andalus through al-Qurṭubī’s “Treatise on the Best and Most Beautiful Names of God”

Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Farḥ al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī al-Qurṭubī was born in Cordoba at an unspecified date. There he learned the seven readings of the Qur’ān with Abū Ja‘far b. Abī Ḥujja—who was also a *ḥadīth* expert—and transmitted from Abū ‘Āmir b. Rabī‘a, the most important of his Andalusī masters (*wa-akthara ‘anhu*). This Ibn Rabī‘a performed as chief *qāḍī* of Cordoba until the city was taken by the Christians in 633/1236, an event which is presumed to have moved al-Qurṭubī to leave al-Andalus for good. In the East he completed his training in *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* and ended up settling in a place corresponding to present day El Minya in Egypt (Minyat Ibn/Banī Khaṣīb), where he died in 671/1273, and where his tomb is still extant and venerated. He does not seem to have performed any public function and is said to have lived very modestly, dedicated to devotion and to the composition of his books. He is labelled al-Mālikī by some of his biographers—though not by Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī or Ibn Farḥūn. Al-Qurṭubī’s works deal with *ḥadīth*, eschatology, the veneration of the Prophet Muḥammad, *zuhd* or

50 On the Almohad *jihād* against the Almoravids and the Qur’ānic reverberations of the language with which it was justified, see Peña and Vega, “La muerte dada en el Corán”.

asceticism, Qur'ānic recitation, Qur'ānic exegesis (a genre in which he excelled with the composition of his *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*), and God's names (*asmā'*) and attributes (*ṣifāt*).⁵¹

On this occasion, we focus on the *Kitāb al-Asnā fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* where we found a series of interesting and telling quotations about the author's Andalusī religious milieu, including al-Ghazālī's reputation among local scholars.⁵² We cannot specify whether the *Kitāb al-Asnā* was written while he was still in al-Andalus. Yet it is one of the author's earliest books since references to it are made in later works by him such as *al-Tadhkār fī afḍal al-adhkār*, on Qur'ānic recitations.⁵³ The latter work is prior to *al-Tadhkira fī aḥwāl al-mawt*, where the *Tadhkār*, the *Asnā* and the *Tafsīr* are mentioned, while the composition of the *Asnā* preceded that of the *Tafsīr*, in which it is mentioned as well.⁵⁴

The questions of the best and most beautiful divine names, and the divergent opinions about what is a divine name and what is not, the exact number of those that are the best and the most beautiful, as well as how to understand their meaning, make up an important chapter in Islamic theology.⁵⁵ Given that their existence is established by the Qur'ān where God enjoins the faithful to name and evoke Him by means of them (Q. 7:180;⁵⁶ see also 17:110; 20:8; 59:24), they are not only the matter of vivid academic debates but an essential pillar of Islamic devotion. Their exact number, namely 99, is specified in a Prophetic *ḥadīth* transmitted by Abū Hurayra (d. 58/678), according to which he who manages to grasp their profound meaning (*aḥṣāhā*) will enter Paradise,⁵⁷ hence

51 On al-Qurṭubī's life and works, with a reference to those that have been wrongly attributed to him, see "Ibn Farḥ al-Qurṭubī, Abū 'Abd Allāh", *BA*, 3 113–16, no. 451, and Serrano-Ruano, "Al-Qurṭubī", *EQ*.

52 See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Asnā fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā wa-ṣifātihi*. Unless indicated otherwise, the pages provided in this paper correspond to the Cairo 2006 edition. The 1995 edition differs from the other two. In fact, its volume 2 corresponds rather to *al-Ṣifāt wa-mā warada fihā min al-āy wa-l-aḥādīth* (on which see "Ibn Farḥ al-Qurṭubī", *BA*, 3:115, no. 8), also edited as an independent work in Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2001. In order to complete or clarify certain aspects of al-Qurṭubī's doctrine on divine names and its contribution to Andalusī intellectual history we have referred to other works by the same author, as indicated in the corresponding footnotes.

53 "Ibn Farḥ al-Qurṭubī", *BA*, 3 115, no. 9, and Salmān, *al-Imām al-Qurṭubī*, 146.

54 See Salmān, *al-Imām al-Qurṭubī*, 98, 128, 134, 146.

55 See Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*; Gardet, "*al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*", *EI*²; Böwering, "God and His attributes", *EQ*. On reciting the divine names as a literary genre and devotional practice among Iberian Muslims see Casassas Canals, "Devoción y sufismo en los manuscritos aljamiado-moriscos", 207–38; *idem*, "The 'Best and Most Beautiful Names of God' in Islamic Books of Devotion".

56 See *al-Asnā*, part 1, section 1, 1.

57 Sections 3 to 5 in *al-Asnā*, part 1 (2–5) are dedicated to this *ḥadīth*.

the importance of a spiritually and intellectually conscious appraisal of their significance for recitation to take the promised effect. In fact, this is the main purpose of treatises such as *Kitāb al-Asnā*. There are two extended versions of the aforementioned *ḥadīth*, including a list of the 99 best and most beautiful names of God, although the names in both lists do not coincide. Meanwhile, these two lists do not include names of God mentioned by the Prophet according to other sound traditions coming from him.

In al-Qurṭubī's words, the best and most beautiful names of God are the light that illuminates and the guide that leads towards the path to knowledge of God the almighty (*ma'rifat Allāh ta'ālā*) ...

Some scholars restricted themselves to the 99 [names] drawn by al-Tirmidhī [when transmitting Abū Hurayra's *ḥadīth* in his *Sunan*] whereas others increased the number but did not reach an agreement concerning the [exact names] to be added [to the list]. Then I saw fit to write a book in order to document a part of the debate, including what they disagreed and agreed on, and to shed light thereupon with the help of scholars' relevant opinions and making use of evidence from the Arabic language and from the most excellent sunna.⁵⁸ [Subsequently] the duties concerning the [names] which the servant is obliged to fulfil are mentioned.⁵⁹ Moreover, every opinion is placed in relation to its [authentic] source [or author].⁶⁰

Al-Qurṭubī does not restrict himself to mentioning the scholars' agreements and disagreements on the issue of God's best and most beautiful names and with giving us hints of his concern with the different ideological trends they relate

58 This is the plan carried out in the first part of the treatise, i.e. the didactic or explanatory part, corresponding to what the editor calls "Muqaddimat al-mufassir" and including 40 sections (1–89).

59 A plan developed in the second or prescriptive part of the book, corresponding to chapters (*qism*) 1 to 5 (90–427). Each subsection within every chapter is dedicated to a single divine name. The names addressed in the subsections do not always figure in the known lists of the best and most beautiful names of God; al-Qurṭubī's purpose is not to provide his list of the best and most beautiful divine names but to illustrate the distinction between divine names, the best and most beautiful divine names, and attributes, as well as to establish which are the divine attributes from which the names derive. All the best and most beautiful names are *a priori* divine names, whereas the reverse is not always the case.

60 See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Asnā*, 1–1 ("Muqaddimat al-imām al-Qurṭubī"). For a more detailed overview of the structure and contents of *al-Asnā* in the context of its genre, see Casassas Canals, "Al-Asnā fī ṣarḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā de Ibn Farḥ al-Qurṭubī".

with. Rather, he occasionally makes explicit statements about his particular stance without us being able to bind him to any particular school of thought.

One of the richest chapters to map al-Qurṭubī in the scholarly networks of his time and situate him quite particularly in terms of al-Ghazālī's reputation is number 33, in the first part.⁶¹ It opens with Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī's account of al-Ghazālī's assessment of Ibn Ḥazm's (d. 456/1064) method for obtaining the list of God's best and most beautiful names. To wit, in his *al-Maqṣad al-asnā fi sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* al-Ghazālī had found it surprising that Ibn Ḥazm—to whom he respectfully referred as "a certain *ḥāfiẓ* from the Maghrib called 'Alī Ibn Ḥazm"—had managed to find only "some 80 names" in the Qur'ān and among the sound Prophetic *ḥadīths* (*al-ṣiḥāḥ min al-akḥbār*), whereas the rest of the names could be derived by means of *ijtihād* from the traditions (*al-akḥbār*). Further, according to the same account, al-Ghazālī would have pointed to the possibility that Ibn Ḥazm did not know the aforementioned *ḥadīth* in which the exact number of God's best and most beautiful names is specified, or found that its chain of transmitters was defective. Otherwise he would not have set it aside in favour of other sound *ḥadīths* (*al-ṣiḥāḥ*) on the basis of which he likely elaborated his position on the best and most beautiful divine names. Subsequently al-Qurṭubī mentions that, according to al-Uqlishī,⁶² the source from which al-Ghazālī became acquainted with Ibn Ḥazm's doctrine on the best and most beautiful divine names was the latter's *Kitāb al-muḥallā fi sharḥ al-mujallā*, a book whose contents confirm that Ibn Ḥazm knew the *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayra transmitted by al-Bukhārī, establishing

61 See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Asnā*, 67–71.

62 Abū l-'Abbās/Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. Ma'add b. 'Īsā b. Wakil al-Tujībī, Shihāb al-Dīn, better known as Ibn al-Uqlishī, or al-Uqlishī al-Dānī (Denia 478/1085–86–Mecca 549/1154 or Qūs (Egypt) 551/1156–57), an expert in lexicography, Arabic language and *ḥadīth* with ascetic inclinations. The long list of his masters includes Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī, Abū 'Alī al-Ghassānī, Abū 'Alī al-Ṣadafī, Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsi, Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ward, Abū l-'Abbās Ibn al-'Arīf, Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn 'Aṭīyya, and Abū l-Ḥasan Ṭarīq Ibn Ya'ish al-Munṣafī with whom he studied *ḥadīth* and whose daughter he married. On divine names and attributes, he wrote *al-Anbā' fi ḥaqā'iq al-ṣifāt wa-l-asmā'* and *Sharḥ al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*, of which several manuscripts are preserved. He abandoned al-Andalus in the company of his father in law after the anti-Almoravid uprisings of 540/1145–46, never to return. In Alexandria he studied with Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī and with Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Karūjī in Mecca. See "Ibn al-Uqlishī Abū l-'Abbās", *BA*, 5:531–35, no. 1287; Maribel Fierro, *History of Authors and Transmitters of al-Andalus* (*HATA*), section "v Mística", no. 373.1, 373.10. For chronological reasons, he could not study directly under Ibn Ḥazm but did so with one of the latter's followers, Abū l-'Abbās Ibn Ṭāhir, who had also studied with al-Ṣadafī and al-Ghassānī. See Adang, "The Spread of Ṣāḥirism in Post-Caliphal al-Andalus", 327ff.

those names as amounting to 99.⁶³ Al-Uqlishī for his part acknowledged that only those names that God gave to Himself can be applied to Him and that their number cannot exceed the figure mentioned in the *ḥadīth*. Also, he stated that the names mentioned in the Qurʾān inform about His actions whereas the reports transmitting that the names amount to 99 are not solid. This led him to the conclusion that according to the Qurʾān and sound *ḥadīth*, God's best and most beautiful names are 84,⁶⁴ as many as those he claims had also been collected by Ibn Ḥazm. This implies that al-Uqlishī agreed with Ibn Ḥazm and that al-Ghazālī was right when assuming that Ibn Ḥazm did not consider the Abū Hurayra *ḥadīth* to be sound. Al-Uqlishī's alignment with Ibn Ḥazm extends to a "group of scholars" for whom 99 was a maximum number rather than the exact figure and who refused to give full credit to the tradition establishing that number.

After presenting these facts, al-Qurṭubī, as al-Ghazālī had done, expresses his surprise at Ibn Ḥazm's refusal to add to the list—and so obtain a total of 99—names mentioned in the Qurʾān, all the more so when God specified he had not "missed anything out of the record" (Q. 6:38).⁶⁵ However, he also observes that Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī went too far in criticizing Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī and Ibn Ḥazm—in this order—in his *Aḥkām* [*al-Qurʾān*] and his *al-Amad* [*al-aqṣā*]. In the first work, itself an important source for al-Qurṭubī's *Jāmiʿ*, Ibn al-ʿArabī referred to Ibn Ḥazm as a "fool from the Maghrib, who claimed to have counted God's names and to have obtained only 80 as a result". Subsequently Ibn al-ʿArabī added:

No wonder. What is really surprising is that the man from Tūs—i.e. al-Ghazālī—said that a certain *ḥāfiẓ* from the Maghrib counted God's names and obtained only 80, on the authority of what a man of the likes of al-Ḥumaydī (d. 488/1095)—who had been deported from Mallorca⁶⁶—transmitted to him. And if Abū Ḥamid committed the error of giving credit to an Andalusī outcast it was because of his [own] ignorance, since

63 In the edition of Ibn Ḥazm's *Muḥallā* that we are dealing with, the subject at stake is discussed in 1:30–31, but there is no reference there to the best and most beautiful divine names amounting to roughly 80; rather the author quotes the Abū Hurayra *ḥadīth*, declares he has discussed the issue in full detail in his *Īṣāl*, and limits himself to pointing out that God has 99 best and most beautiful names and that these names are those with which God described Himself in the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth*.

64 See the list in al-Qurṭubī, *al-Asnā*, 68.

65 We follow *The Qurʾān, English translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem*. For the list of names left out by Ibn Ḥazm see *al-Asnā*, 68.

66 And who happened to be a disciple of Ibn Ḥazm and a renowned follower of his *Zāhiri* doctrine.

if on the one hand he [i.e. al-Ḥumaydī] was eloquent, scathing and too wordy, he was [also] short of the basic rule (*al-qānūn*). And, al-Qurṭubī proceeds further, “[Ibn al-ʿArabī] added that the names Ramaḍān, Sulṭān and Dayyān mentioned by al-Ghazālī, draw on a *ḥadīth* they [Ibn Ḥazm and his peers] used to transmit but which nobody else takes into consideration”.⁶⁷

In al-Qurṭubī’s opinion, there is no ground for Ibn al-ʿArabī’s *excessive precaution* (the same attitude Ibn Rushd al-Jadd had reproached Ibn al-Ilbīrī regarding al-Ghazālī’s doctrine on the soul). Al-Qurṭubī reiterates that those names explicitly mentioned in the Qurʾān and which were not obtained through deduction or addition, do not reach the number 99, as already noted by al-Uqlishī and al-Ḥaṣṣār (d. Medina 611/1214 or 1215). Furthermore, al-Qurṭubī observes, “Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions *al-naẓīf* and other names on the authority of Ibn Barraġān, *al-naẓīf* being a name other scholars like Ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār had not accepted, arguing that it has no basis in the Qurʾān or the sunna”. This claim is rejected by al-Qurṭubī.⁶⁸ He adds that reciting the names mentioned in the weak *ḥadīth* [to which Ibn al-ʿArabī, contrary to al-Ghazālī, had refused to lend full credibility] is good and nice. Al-Qurṭubī’s irritation with Ibn al-ʿArabī is particularly noteworthy when addressing the latter’s remark that Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 196/811)⁶⁹ had omitted names mentioned in the Qurʾān because, when he was asked about the number of names and after counting them, he

67 However, drawing on the evidence provided by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229), it might have been Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī’s father—himself a disciple of Ibn Ḥazm—who transmitted the said piece of information to al-Ghazālī, given that, before leaving al-Andalus, Ibn al-ʿArabī’s father secured the permission of his former master to pass information about him to al-Ghazālī. See Asín Palacios, *Abenḥázam de Córdoba*, 1:16 note 14, and García Sanjuán, “Ibn Ḥazm and the Territory of Huelva”, 53–54. Yet, according to al-Dhahabī (*Tadhkira*, 3 228), al-Ghazālī declared he had “found a book (*kitāb*) about the names of God Almighty composed by Abū Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm which shows his vast memory and the plasticity of his intellect”. See Puerta Vilchez, “Inventory of Ibn Hazm’s work”, 677, no. 7.

On Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī’s animosity towards Ibn Ḥazm see Serrano-Ruano, “El Corán como fuente de legislación”, 257; Puerta Vilchez, et al., “Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad”, *BA*, 3:400, and Adang, “Shurayḥ al-Ruʿaynī”, 519, note 19.

68 More on the names added by Ibn al-ʿArabī on the authority of Ibn Barraġān in al-Qurṭubī, *al-jāmiʿ li-ahkām al-Qurʾān*, 9:394–95 (commentary to Q. 7 189 where the contents of *al-Asnā* are summarized).

69 He is the source of one of the most authoritative lists of God’s best and most beautiful names. See Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, 69–73. Sufyān’s list also appears to have been very popular among Iberian mudéjars and moriscos. See Casassas Canals, “Devoción y sufismo en los manuscritos aljamiado-moriscos”, 229–32.

did not take into account those appearing in the *sūrat al-baqara*, that is to say, Shākir, Ilāh, Wāḥid and Qarīb. This, in al-Qurṭubī's opinion, is "sheer invention, foolishness and speculation". Moreover, al-Qurṭubī suggests again that Ibn al-'Arabī contradicts himself for in his *Kitāb al-Amad*, the only name that figures as omitted by Ibn 'Uyayna in that very same connection is Qarīb. Also he points out that Ibn al-'Arabī did not take into account that according to al-Zajjājī and others, the list at stake—with a number of identified omissions—, did not originate in Ibn 'Uyayna but in Abū Zayd, and provides the list of omitted names making up a total of 19.⁷⁰

It is hard to overlook the similarity between al-Qurṭubī's mistrust of demonstrations of excessive zeal and fussiness that bordered on bad faith, and Ibn Rushd's approach to Ibn al-Ilbīrī's criticisms of al-Ghazālī's doctrine on the soul. Al-Qurṭubī's contempt for exaggeration and extra-limitation in inter-religious polemics becomes even less equivocal in the appreciative attitude with which he addresses Ibn Masarra—a most controversial representative of pre-Ghazālīan Andalusī mysticism⁷¹—and his sensitive stance on divine names that was so imbued with esotericism. Discussing the doctrines entertained by some Sufis (*ba'd al-Ṣūfiyya*) according to which the letters of certain divine names have a numerical value,⁷² he recounts that the Cordoban Ibn Masarra al-Jabalī subscribed to that view, claiming that:

The letters that open the suras and the 99 divine names which appear in sound Prophetic traditions are expressions of luminous and spiritual existents (*mawjūdāt nūrāniyya rūḥāniyya*) created (*abda'ahā*) by God—let Him be praised—out of nothing; that the first innovated thing (*mubda'*) was the throne which is the conclusive name (*wa-huwa l-ism al-a'zam*) with which [the list] reaches the hundred; that with these names an indication to the Named is made—let Him be praised—(*wa-anna bi-hādhihi l-asmā' yustadall 'alā l-Musammā subḥānahu*); that he who learns them learns the science of the divine and of prophecy (*man 'alimahā fa-qad 'alima 'ilm al-rubūbiyya wa-l-nubuwwa*) and all the science of this world and the next (*jamt 'ilm al-dunyā wa-l-ākhirā*);⁷³ that they are the one

70 See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Asnā*, 70–71.

71 On whom see now Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*.

72 See *al-Asnā*, first part, section 35, 82–84.

73 The latter claim in particular incites an exclamation from the editor who considers it to be sheer infidelity (*al-kufr bi-'aynihi*). Were it not for the sake of scientific rigor and religious fidelity, he says, the sentence ought to be removed from beginning to end. See *al-Asnā*, 83, note 1. Science of the hereafter (*'ilm al-ākhirā*) is the term with which al-Ghazālī labels the new vision of the Islamic religious sciences he put forward in the *Iḥyā'*. His originality

hundred that appear in the *ḥadīth*; that they are the hundred steps of Paradise; that they are in the Qurʾān in the second half of a sura that neither belongs to the explicit nor to the decisive (*sūra laysat min al-mubayyan wa-lā min al-mufaṣṣal*); that God had taught these names to him (i.e. he who is ready to learn them) after a *strong effort* (*baʿda taʿab shadīd*), long investigation, retreat from worldly affairs in dedication to those of the afterlife; that they are not written in any book but represented symbolically and that if someone had the upright intention of learning them in one year he would be able to attain all the [relevant] science [in that time].

The above, al-Qurṭubī proceeds to say, was stated in several books by Ibn Masarra so that his fellow countrymen obliged him to leave while al-Zubaydī (d. 379/989), the *faqīh* Ibn Abī Zayd [al-Qayrawānī], Abū ʿUmar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1037) and the Qurʾān reciter Abū ʿAmr al-Dānī (d. 444/1053) refuted him, but they exaggerated in their condemnation (*wa-aʿzamū l-nakīr ʿalayhi*) when they said that he had turned God's names into creatures. He replied that this was not his purpose nor had he ever said that God—let Him be praised and exalted—can be described by His essence with every description of beauty which the rational intellects consider admissible to refer to Him, since His essence—let Him be praised—is not devoid of attributes of praise even though those attributes are not limited to a number; rather, every beautiful description according to Arabic or to any other language can be applied to God—let Him be praised. With respect to the 99 names transmitted by the *ḥadīth* and the conclusive name, they are those that I say are initiated and created (*mubdaʿāt majʿūlāt*), not creatures (*makhḷūqāt*), since they are not bodies that enter into the [category of the] creation and of bodily measurement. Rather, what I say is that God created them after their non-existence (*abdaʿahā baʿda ʿadam*) whereas if the attributes were pre-eternal (*lam tazāl*) so would the creatures be, because the world is comprised of their simple existence (*al-ʿālam murakkab min wujūdihā al-basīṭ*).

However, the philosophers were leading to error (*dallala al-falāsifa*) when they claimed that these simples have a cause (*anna ḥādhihi l-basāʾiṭ maʿlūla*), which was [put forward by] al-Kindī in [a book

does not therefore rely on a certain terminological selection but, rather, as posited by Kenneth Garden, on articulating his vision around a rhetoric of revival, emerging as the first—though not the last—self-proclaimed divinely appointed Renewer of his age. See *The First Islamic Reviver*, 109–11, 169.

by him entitled] *Kitāb fam al-dhahab*, and was refuted.⁷⁴ He [i.e. Ibn Masarra] claimed that this doctrine that he entertained belonged to the pious and well-guided ancestors (*al-salaf al-muwaffaq*) and that, when they learnt these names, they learnt the secrets of the Qurʾān. The Ashʿarīs and all the jurists rejected all he said with the argument that these demands, if given credit, border on the abyss, because none of what he said is based on a proof or has a principle or an explanation in the *sharʿa*, but are, rather, inventions of his mind. However, al-Qurṭubī states, there is no scope for reason in these things (*laysa lil-ʿaql fī hādhihi l-ashyāʾ majāl*).

Qurṭubī's empathy for Ibn Masarra, and the obvious distance he takes from Ashʿarīs and jurists does not imply either unconditional support of the Sufis, some of whose doctrines and methodologies he criticizes on a number of occasions,⁷⁵ or total rejection of the Ashʿarīs.

As a matter of fact, al-Qurṭubī opposes the practice of certain "extremist" (*ghulāt*) and "ignorant" Sufis of referring to God by the name al-ʿĀshiq and striking the ground with their feet as they recite it during their *samāʿ* sessions.⁷⁶ In his view, there are no grounds to argue, as al-Qurṭubī says they do, that this name is derived from [divine] love (*ḥubb*) through *qiyās*.⁷⁷ In the context of his rejection of some Sufi practices such as dancing, al-Qurṭubī quotes a *fatwā* issued by the aforementioned Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, in which the latter calls on the political authorities to ban participation in similar ceremonies. The quotation occurs in the *Jāmiʿ* after commenting on Q. 20:91–93 a propos the need to "enjoin good, forbid and change wrong, and avoid those who fall into it, and that he who dwells among them, especially if he does so willingly, deserves the same judgment corresponding to them" (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar wa-taghyīrihi wa-mufāraqat ahlihi wa-anna l-muqīma baynahum lā siyyamā idhā kāna rāḍīyan ḥukmuhu ka-ḥukmihim*).⁷⁸ Al-Qurṭubī also attributes to the "ignorant" among the Sufis the error of naming God with feminine

74 The work is mentioned with this title by Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī, who describes it as a "work on oneness (*tawḥīd*)" in which the author followed the view of Plato concerning the creation of the world without time. This seems to be the same work by the same author quoted by Ibn Ḥazm under the title of *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. See Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 8–9.

75 Although on other occasions, he praises the beauty of their intentions. See Salmān, *al-Imām al-Qurṭubī*, 188–202.

76 See *al-Asnā*, first part, section 17, 23.

77 See *al-Asnā*, first part, section 16, 22–23. The Ashʿarīs—Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī among them—reject *qiyās* as a valid method for adding divine names to the list, with the exception of al-Bāqillānī and, to a certain extent too, of al-Ghazālī. See Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, 38ff.

78 See Salmān, *al-Imām al-Qurṭubī*, 202–4 quoting al-Qurṭubī's *Jāmiʿ*, 14:124–25.

words⁷⁹ and, in general, reproaches the Bāṭiniyya and the philosophers for denying God's attributes, and the Rāfiḍis and the Karrāmiyya for asserting them to extremes leading to anthropomorphism.⁸⁰

Al-Qurṭubī's claim that different comprehension levels of God's names exist between common believers, friends of God, prophets, and God points to an approach to the issue of religious authority in line with the relevant Ash'arī position. However, he prefers to ascribe it to "the people of understanding and of signals who dealt with the issue of [God's] names and attributes", a positive characterization indicating that these were the people he identified with and whose ranks he aspired to join, rather than a given school of thought. According to this view, prophets rank higher than friends of God who, in turn, are above speculative scholars (*al-nuẓẓār min al-ʿulamāʾ*):

Verily the 99 divine names appearing in the Qur'ān and sound prophetic tradition are the explicit names (*al-asmāʾ al-zāhira*); when people learn them, they worship God because this is available to them with acquired knowledge, investigation and reflection (*bi-l-kasb wa-l-baḥṭh wa-l-naẓar*). Yet behind (*warāʾ*) these 99 names there are other names [knowledge of which] is exclusive to the prophets and the friends [of God] and which cannot be reached by means of acquired [knowledge]. Rather this is a privilege granted by God to whom He wants. And behind what is known by the Prophets and the friends of God there are [names] that only God knows ... The level of knowledge about the divine names reached by the friends of God is superior to that of speculative scholars in three respects: 1) that what they managed to understand about the meaning of the 99 names through [divine] support and inspiration (*bi-l-taʿyīd wa-l-ilhām*)⁸¹ could not be reached by the latter through intellectual speculation and rational proofs (*al-naẓar wa-l-burhān*); 2) that they, i.e. the friends, know about implicit (*bāṭina*) names hidden behind the 99 [explicit names]; 3) that they alone—to the exclusion of the scholars—had sight and

79 See *al-Asnā*, first part, section 17, 23.

80 See *al-Ṣifāt wa-mā warada fihā min al-āy wa-l-aḥādīth* (second volume of the Tanta, 1416/1995 edition of *al-Asnā*), 20.

81 For the Eastern Ismāʿīlis, *taʿyīd* is "the source of the power and special virtues possessed by the prophets and *imāms*; through it they receive Divine knowledge which is then manifested in the *sharʿa* and its esoteric interpretation (*taʾwīl*)". This term also plays an important role in the thought of the Ismāʿīli Neoplatonists, the *Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* and the Andalusī Neoplatonists. However, according to the *Ikhwān*, the believers too are "supported" if they "follow the prophets and their heirs or those who adhere to the religious-spiritual path outlined by the *Ikhwān* in their Epistles". See Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, 64–72.

knowledge over (*ikhtaṣṣū bi-l-iṭṭilāʿ ʿalā*) Allāh's supreme name mentioned in more than one Prophetic *ḥadīth* ... Prophets [for their part], through the light of the Revelation (*nūr al-waḥy*), know about the meanings of the 99 names what the friends of God are not able to know through inspiration (*ilhām*).⁸²

Al-Qurṭubī favours the opinion of al-Ashʿarī (“al-Shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan”) and of al-Bāqillānī (“*al-qāḍī* Ibn al-Ṭayyib”) over that of Ibn Ḥazm concerning the possibility that God's names may exceed the 99 fixed in the *ḥadīth*, that figure referring to the best and most beautiful with which it is mandatory for the believer to invoke God.⁸³ He accepts al-Bāqillānī's interpretation (*taʿwīl*) of the *ḥadīth* according to which God's names are 99 and whoever manages to comprehend them will enter Paradise in the sense that

they are expressions of the divine being according to manifold descriptions, some of which correspond to Him by Himself while others do so by virtue of a description related to Him. Those divine names referring to Him are identical with Him and those related with a description of His are [expressions] with which He can be named. Among them there are [names] describing His essence while others describe His actions (*wa-hiya ʿibārāt ʿan kawṇ Allāh taʿālā ʿalā awṣāf shattā minhā mā yastahiqquhu li-nafsihi wa-minhā mā yastahiqquhu li-ṣifatin tataʿallaq bihi wa-asmāʾuhu al-ʿāda ilā nafsihi hiya huwa wa-mā yataʿallaq bi-ṣifatin lahu fa-hiya asmāʾ lahu wa-minhā ṣifāt li-dhātihi wa-minhā ṣifāt afʿālihi*).⁸⁴

82 See *al-Asnā*, first part, section 35, 79–80. Nothing here encourages us to conclude that the divine support and inspiration enjoyed by the saints is the product of performing good deeds and supererogatory acts of worship but rather “a privilege granted by God to whom He wants”, whereas for Ibn Masarra God teaches names that are not apparent to the eye to those who are ready to learn them “after a *strong effort* (*baʿda taʿab shadīd*), long investigation and retreat from worldly affairs in dedication to those of the afterlife”. Admission that saints know things that are not accessible to the average scholar through divine inspiration might be due to al-Ghazālī's influence, but not necessarily or exclusively so, for the existence of saints and their superiority with respect to scholars had long been accepted by the Ashʿarīs.

83 See *al-Asnā*, first part, section 8, 9–11. For other cases in which al-Qurṭubī transmits opinions on the authority of al-Ashʿarī and/or any of his followers without objecting see *ibid*, first part, section 9, 13 and *al-Ṣifāt wa-mā warada fihā min al-āy wa-l-aḥādīth*, 21–22, 169–73 (quoting Fakhr al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad Ibn ʿUmar b. al-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī, along with al-Juwaynī, Ibn Fūrak and al-Bāqillānī).

84 See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 9:393.

He is ready to acknowledge the presence of “verifiers” among the Ash‘arīs (*muḥaqqiqī al-Ash‘ariyya*) and sides with them and with the Sunnis in their denial that names referring to sensory perceptions such as *dhā‘iq*, *shāmm* or *lāmis*, can be applied to God, the latter claim being attributed by al-Qurṭubī to the Mu‘tazilīs and the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*). Moreover, his view as to which divine names are appropriate to name and invoke God, which are allowed for naming Him but not for invoking Him and which are not allowed at all is avowedly based on Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī’s. And finally, he endorses al-Juwaynī’s refutation of the Mu‘tazilīs and his arguments that assert the reality of afterlife and of the extraordinary events described in the Qur‘ān and Prophetic *sunna*—e.g. Muḥammad’s ascent to the heavens (*mi‘rāj*).⁸⁵ However, he appears to give prevalence to the explanation provided by

our scholars (*‘ulamā’unā*) to reconcile God’s omnipotence—including the capacity to perceive sounds, images, tastes and odours—and the impossibility of applying names to God such as *dhā‘iq*, *shāmm* or *lāmis* because of the implication that He is short of anything (*nuqṣān*) that is inherent in them, over and above the scholastic arguments put forward by the Ash‘arīs to explain the legal prohibition (*mana‘anā al-shar‘ min dhālika*) that governs the use of such names.⁸⁶

More interestingly, in what we have called the second part of his book, dedicated to the analysis of a number of divine names, al-Qurṭubī claims to have classified them under five headings. These correspond to the “five tenets of belief” (*al-‘aqā’id al-khamsa*) along which al-Ḥākim Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥalīmī (d. 403/1012) had articulated the contents of his *Minhāj fī shu‘ab al-imān*. Al-Ḥalīmī’s method, which al-Qurṭubī finds very good (*fa-ḥasan jiddan*), had also been followed by al-Imām Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066).⁸⁷ The headings express well known Ash‘arī positions: 1. “On the affirmation of the Creator, in order to avoid Him being stripped [of attributes] (*fī ithbāt al-bārī ta‘ālā li-taqā’a bihi mufāraqat al-ta‘īl*);” 2. “On the affirmation of His unicity, in order to avoid idolatry (*fī ithbāt waḥdāniyyatihi li-taqā’a bihi l-barā’a min al-shirk*);” 3. “On the affirmation that He is not a substance, nor an accident, in order to avoid assimilation

85 See *al-Jāmi‘ li-aḥkām al-Qur‘ān*, 9:395 and *al-Ṣifāt wa-mā warada fihā min al-āy wa-l-aḥādīth* (second volume of the Tanta 1416/1995 edition of *al-Asnā*), 199–200.

86 See *al-Asnā*, first part, section 40, 88.

87 See *al-Asnā*, first part, section 40, 88–89, where the structure of the second part is presented. On al-Ḥalīmī as the source of al-Bayhaqī and his thematic classification of God’s names, also see Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, 21–22, 101–6.

[with His creatures] (*fi ithbāt annahu laysa bi-jawhar wa-lā ‘araḍ li-taqā’a bihi l-barā’a min al-tashbih*);” 4. “On the affirmation that the existence of everything else that existed before, except Him, was created and invented by Him *ex nihilo*, in order to stop those who hold for [the existence of a first] cause and effect (*fi ithbāt anna wujūda kull mā siwāhu min qablu ibdā’uhu wa-ikhtirā’uhu li-taqā’a bihi l-barā’a min kull man yaqūl bi-l-‘illa wa-l-ma’lūl*);” and 5. “On the affirmation that He is the One who controls and manages what He created [*ex nihilo*] according to His will, in order to stop those who hold for the [existence of] natural agents, or for celestial bodies’ or angels’ capacity to control [things] (*fi ithbāt annahu mudabbir mā abda’a wa-muṣarriḥu ‘alā mā shā’a li-taqā’a bihi l-barā’a min qawlat al-qā’ilīn bi-l-ṭabā’i’ aw tadbīr al-kawākib aw tadbīr al-malā’ika*).”⁸⁸

The emphasis on God’s unicity and the sharp rejection of assimilation and idolatry are in tune with the abhorrence of anthropomorphism so characteristic of Almohad theology, whereas the denial of the existence of a first cause seems to be addressed to the Neoplatonists,⁸⁹ and probably also to emergent monist Sufis such as Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240),⁹⁰ or to the doctrine on the eternity of the world and the eternal emanation from the first agent or cause held by the philosophers.⁹¹ As for the uncompromised assertion of God’s attributes, there is some contrast with the ambiguity of the Almohad corresponding position since, as was pointed out by Madeleine Fletcher, the reality of the attributes is asserted in the most intellectually sophisticated version of the Almohad creed (the *‘aqida*) but denied—or perceived as such by later generations of Muslims like Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328)—in the spiritual guide conceived to be memorized by lay believers (i.e. the shorter or first *Murshida*).⁹²

88 See *al-Asnā*, first part, section 40, 88–89.

89 See also Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, 101.

90 However, al-Qurṭubī does not appear to be particularly preoccupied with Ibn ‘Arabī’s selection of the best and most beautiful divine names or, as we have already seen, with Ibn Masarra’s doctrine on their meaning. On creation as a result of a First Cause identified with Divine speech (*kalima*) in the thought of the *Ikhwan al-Ṣafā’* and its impact on Andalusī Neoplatonism, see Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, 46–57.

91 See Martínez Núñez, “El califato almohade”, 204–5. Núñez notes also al-Ghazālī’s stress on the idea of *tawḥīd* and on the reality of divine names, these being the pillars of his central argument that God’s creation of the Universe was *ex nihilo*, free and temporal. For al-Ghazālī, recitation of the best and most beautiful divine names is, together with veneration of the Prophet and ritual prayer, the ideal complement to reason in the path drawing the believer to God’s proximity. The creation of the world *ex nihilo* is, as we have seen, also central for al-Qurṭubī though he does not claim al-Ghazālī’s but al-Ḥalīmī’s authority in this regard.

92 See “The Almohad *Tawḥīd*”. Also see Henry Laoust’s aforementioned opinion. According to Dominique Urvoý, the discrepancy between the *‘aqida* and the *Murshida* on the

For al-Qurṭubī, asserting the reality of God's best and most beautiful names is asserting His most excellent attributes, "as our scholars (*ʿulamāʾunā*) say". Belief that God is Omniscient through a science, Omnipotent through a power, Living through a life, Willing through a will (*ʿālim bi-ʿilm, qādir bi-quḍra, ḥayy bi-ḥayāt, murīd bi-irāda*) ... is mandatory. The Muʿtazilīs, the Shīʿīs and the philosophers, he claims without making any explicit or indirect reference to the Almohads, deny the reality of God's attributes, but their pretension was refuted by the Ashʿarīs for whom it amounted to *taʿṭīl* (i.e. stripping God of His attributes).⁹³ And though as far as divine attributes are concerned al-Qurṭubī lines up with the latter, he again gives precedence to the stance of the "righteous ones" (*ahl al-ḥaqq*) for whom "our religion is a middle term between assimilation and dispossession (*tashbīh wa-taʿṭīl*)". Asked how to define God's unicity (*al-tawḥīd*), one of them, the Sufi Abū l-Ḥasan al-Būshanjī (d. 348/960) answered that it is "the assertion of an essence that is not like the rest of the essences, and is not stripped of the attributes (*ithbāt dhātīn ḡhayr mushab-baha bi-l-dhawāt wa-lā muʿaṭṭala min al-ṣifāt*)".⁹⁴ Again on the authority of the "righteous ones" al-Qurṭubī declares that the name (*al-ism*) is the [same] as the named (*al-musammā*) or a description of it that depends on or is related with it and is different from the designation (*al-tasmiya*).⁹⁵

question of God's attributes does not compromise the internal coherence of Almohad theology in which God's attributes are conceived as mere designations (see "Les professions de foi d'Ibn Tūmart"). In the *Murshida* the servant is commanded to believe that God has "best and most beautiful names" but their number is not specified (see De Goeje, "Goldziher's Le livre de Moḥammed ibn Toumert", 482). In her "La religión", 448 Maribel Fierro mentions that the Almohad caliph Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʾmūn gave up the doctrine on both the impeccability of the *mahdī* and on divine attribute's lack of real existence in 627/1230 and that both doctrines were reintroduced by al-Maʾmūn's successor, al-Rashīd (ruled between 630/1232–640/1242). Fierro draws on Ambrosio Huici Miranda's *Historia política del imperio almohade* and on Dominique Urvoy's *Pensers d'al-Andalus*, drawing in their turn on Ibn ʿIdhārī's *Bayān*, Ibn al-Khaṭīb's *Iḥāṭa*, Ibn Khaldūn's *Iḥṣān*, and al-Shāṭibī's *Iʿtiṣām* (on the latter see M. Fierro, "Doctrina y prácticas jurídicas bajo los almohades", 91). However, we have not managed to find any reference to the abandonment of the said doctrine on divine attributes in the latter three sources nor in Ibn ʿIdhārī's *Bayān*, where the text of the decree issued by al-Maʾmūn is reproduced.

93 See *al-Ṣifāt wa-mā warada fihā min al-āy wa-l-aḥādīth*, 3–4. Leaving apart the contents of the known versions of the Almohad creed, one of the *fatwās* issued by Ibn Rushd examined above indicates that Ibn Tūmart or the emerging Almohads were concerned with the risk of incurring in *taʿṭīl* allegedly inherent in neglecting the study of the fundamentals of belief.

94 See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 9:396. In note no. 2, the editor asserts that al-Qurṭubī is quoting here al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*.

95 See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 9:392.

As for the defence of divine pre-destination implied in the denial of *tadbīr* (i.e. belief that celestial bodies can “control” things), it appears to be in harmony not only with the Almohad approach to God’s providence and His decreeing of men’s destiny⁹⁶ but also with the classical Ash’arī rejection of the existence of natural causality and causal relations among created things.⁹⁷ Neither al-Ḥalīmī in his *Minhāj* nor al-Qurṭubī in his *Asnā* are particularly specific when it comes to identifying those who hold “for celestial bodies’ or angels’ capacity to control [things]”; the former simply connects these ideas with a “group of people” (*qawm*).⁹⁸ Talking about the duration of pregnancy, which classical Islamic legal schools extend well beyond the terms fixed by modern medicine, Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī criticized those among his fellow Mālikīs who claimed that the maximum length of pregnancy was nine months and so aligned with erroneous people like the “naturalists” (*al-ṭabāʾiyyūn*), who believe in astrological determinism.⁹⁹

The reason for following al-Ḥalīmī might be related with a certain ideological affinity and a taste for independence.¹⁰⁰ Be that as it may, the names

96 See Urvoy, “Les professions de foi d’Ibn Tūmart”; *idem*, *Pensers d’al-Andalus*, 171; Nagel, “La destrucción de la ciencia de la *ṣarīʿa*”, 301.

97 Though according to Nagel (“La destrucción”, 301, 302), Ibn Tūmart’s claim that “creation is a whole governed by fixed rules imposed by God, rules which become manifest to those who inquire into the connections between things and events that can be deduced from meanings and figures”, runs counter to the Ash’arī’s position.

98 See al-Ḥalīmī, *Kitāb al-Minhāj fī shuʿab al-īmān*, 1:185. In his refutation of Avicenna’s (d. 428/1037) teaching that certain effects *necessarily* proceed from certain causes in accordance with the natures of things, al-Ghazālī attributes to the “eternalists” (*dahriyyūn*) the belief that the world is eternal and has no cause or maker and claims that this view is close to the Muʿtazilīs’ doctrine on the generation (*tawallud*) of human actions and their effects. Yet he concedes that “the intellects of the celestial spheres, which were thought to be referred to in revelation as ‘angels,’ may be middle elements or intermediaries in causal chains that all have their beginnings in God”. See Griffel, “Al-Ghazali”, section 7, “Causality in al-Ghazālī”, and *idem.*, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, 151–52.

99 See Ghaly, “Biomedical Scientists as Co-Muftis”, 291, drawing on *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, 2003), 3:80. One of those Mālikīs was the Egyptian Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (d. 214/829). See Shabana, “Negation of Paternity in Islamic Law”, 178. As to the “naturalists” they admit to be identified with Andalusī physicians like the 10th century ʿArīb b. Ṣāʿid. See Samsó, *Las Ciencias de los Antiguos en al-Andalus*, 116–18.

100 This affinity would have also led al-Qurṭubī to follow al-Ḥalīmī’s doctrine on *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*, on which see Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 368–69. According to Gimaret, the fact that al-Ḥalīmī had studied under several direct disciples of al-Ash’arī and his command of *kalām* does not make him an Ash’arī. However, his argument to illustrate this point is problematic since holding that faith is defined by the performance of good deeds and, very particularly, that it is subject to increase and decrease depending on behaviour, though characteristic of the Ḥanbalīs, is also attributed to the Ash’arīs and the majority of the scholars of the Sunni schools (see Gardet, “Imān”,

selected by al-Qurṭubī to enter into al-Ḥalīmī's categories do not coincide with those selected by the latter himself, and are arranged in a different order or presented in a different manner. This difference may be explained in each author's particular focus: al-Ḥalīmī's approach to the issue of God's names is global and as a chapter of the general issue of the means to strengthen faith. Al-Qurṭubī, for his part, is focused on "the best and most beautiful divine names" the centrality of which to define Islamic faith he deems worthy of special and at length treatment. Al-Qurṭubī's list of "best and most beautiful" names differs from that provided by al-Ḥalīmī under that specific heading as well and is anomalous with respect to previous lists of the like in that it not only includes but starts with an odd divine name, namely that of *Shay'*.¹⁰¹

section IV, question 1). What is clear is that, like al-Qurṭubī himself, al-Ḥalīmī stood out as a *ḥadīth* expert whose *Kitāb al-Minhāj fi shu'ab al-īmān*—namely al-Qurṭubī's source—is a theological summa "explicitement inspirée par le *ḥadīth*" and that he was an "idiosyncratic" Shāfi'ī jurist some of whose legal opinions were nuanced or refuted by later adherents of the school. Before al-Qurṭubī became interested in al-Ḥalīmī's *Minhāj*, the work had been abridged by a Maghribī *mutakallim* and exegete of Andalusī origin named 'Abd al-Jalīl b. Mūsā al-Qaṣrī (d. 608/1211). See Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, 31–32 and Gilliot, "al-Ḥalīmī, Abū 'Abdallāh", *ET*³. As for al-Qurṭubī's own approach, it is telling that he did not take into account the declared Ash'arī Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'īnī who, according to Gimaret (*Les noms divins en Islam*, 106–7), had also classified divine names by subject rather than following an alphabetic order, or the traditional lists provided by Sufyān and Walīd, contrary—which is odd in itself—to the Andalusī mystic Ibn 'Arabi.

- 101 According to Gimaret, the name *Shay'* is included by the Mu'tazilī 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1025) in a chapter devoted to "différents noms qui s'appliquent à Dieu de toute éternité, bien qu'ils ne signifient pas les attributs essentiels qui Lui sont propres", by the Ash'arī Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) in his *Tafsīr asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*—where *Shay'* is classified among the intransitive divine names or among those God deserves by virtue of His essence—, and by al-Rāzī who considers it a purely essential attribute (*ṣifa ḥaqīqīyya*) which does not imply negation (*salb*) nor relation (*iḍāfa*) but existence. See *Les noms divins en Islam*, 97–98, 108–10, 113–14. Be that as it may, al-Qurṭubī's criteria for classifying God's best and most beautiful names appears to coincide with the criteria the reputed scholar in the field Daniel Gimaret considers to be the best of those he examined: "Le meilleur mode de classement est, en définitive, celui de Ḥalīmī. Là, ce sont bien les seules significations des noms divins qui sont prises en compte, ceux-ci étant répartis selon qu'ils concernent tel ou tel aspect de la personne divine ... Le seul tort de ce classement est qu'il est trop sommaire, et que ses rubriques sont en partie mal adaptées. La catégorie v (*tadbīr*) est un fourre-tout. La catégorie II (*ibdā'*) place sous la notion de création des qualificatifs qui n'ont avec elle aucun lien sémantique ... Le classement de Ḥalīmī, pour imparfait qu'il soit, 'fonctionne' à peu près convenablement pour la raison qu'en règle générale Ḥalīmī n'a retenu chaque fois qu'un des sens possibles des termes qu'il commente" (*Le noms divins en Islam*, 115–16). It is a curious coincidence—especially because Gimaret does not include al-Qurṭubī's *Asnā* in his review—that adds to our emphasis in al-Qurṭubī's attempt to produce a rational well-organized approach to the issue of divine names.

In sum, al-Qurṭubī's declared source and aims allow for describing *al-Asnā* as his personal commitment to an Islamic profession of faith articulated around the subject of the best and most beautiful divine names. Thereby a central point of practiced devotion is inserted into a theoretical frame that defines and prescribes sound belief and proper mental representation of the divine, and is strongly imbued with contextual (say Ash'arī-Almohad) elements.¹⁰² It is not the enunciation of the headings that leads to the Almohad context but the very idea of using an Ash'arī mould to introduce system and rationalization into the genre. We are also inclined to see the Almohad intellectual context as a backdrop to the requirement "for every legally responsible person to know" (*fa-yajib 'alā kull mukallaḥ an ya'lama anna ...*) that God is—or is not—such and such, opening the author's assessment of certain divine names.¹⁰³ The formula matches word by word the opening statement of Ibn Tūmart's *Murshida*¹⁰⁴ reflecting for the first time in a profession of faith produced in the Islamic West, the obligation not just to believe but to know (*'ilm*) the strength of its principles upon all believers, be they lay or learned people. Yet al-Qurṭubī would have hardly agreed with equating non compliance with unbelief punishable by death. Indeed, he rejected Ibn Zayd's claim that *dharū* in Q. 7:180 (*dharū alladhīna yulḥidūna fī asmā'ihī*: "let them go without presenting any objection or opposing them in any manner") had been abrogated by the need to fight them (*al-qitāl*). He rather agrees with understanding it as an admonition (*wa'id*) because "it corresponds to the literal sense of the verse ... but God knows best".¹⁰⁵ In his view,

after acknowledging His unicity and believing that He is the Lord (*al-iqrār bi-waḥdāniyyatihi wa-l-taṣdīq bi-rubūbiyyatihi*), the first obligation of the believer is to know what is obligatory, possible and impossible about Him ... If the question arises as to how belief in something the intellect cannot comprehend can be valid, the right answer is that our faith is correct on the basis of that which we are considered accountable for, since

102 The importance attached by the Almohads to the combination of knowledge and practice was stressed above. Apart from Cornell, this trait was also pointed out by Urvoy and Nagel. See "Les professions de foi d'Ibn Tūmart" and "La destrucción de la ciencia de la *ṣarī'a*", respectively.

103 For an illustration, see the sections dedicated to the names *al-Mawjūd*, *al-Ma'būd*, *al-Kā'in*, *al-Qadīm*, *al-Awwal* and *al-Ākhir*.

104 See above, notes 45, 46 and De Goeje, "Goldziher's Le livre de Moḥammed ibn Toumert", 482.

105 See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 9:395–96.

our mind is perfectly able to understand that we were ordered to believe in and abide by that.¹⁰⁶

Al-Qurṭubī's non-conformism is another interesting trait that binds him to his Andalusī context. At the beginning of this section we alluded to al-Ghazālī's admiration for the scholar Ibn Ḥazm. In al-Ghazālī's view, he was at the head of the field in his efforts to identify the best and most beautiful divine names, notwithstanding his lack of success in that regard since he only managed to find "some 80" names. Al-Ghazālī, for his part, asserts that God has many names, that the best and most beautiful ones are part of them, that they amount to 99 and that they lead to salvation. He acknowledges the difficulty of the task to identify them but ends up adopting al-Walīd's list because it is the most widespread (*wa-lākinnā jaraynā 'alā l-'āda fī sharḥ tilka al-asāmī fa-innahā hiya l-riwāya al-mashhūra*), despite his conviction that this list contains names that do not necessarily correspond to the 99 meant by the Prophet.¹⁰⁷ Al-Qurṭubī, however, is not satisfied with lists lacking all the required authenticity guarantees and, like Ibn Ḥazm, strives to find the truth about them.

The requirement to do one's best to acquire true knowledge about God is not exclusive of the Almohads as Ibn Rushd al-Jadd's above mentioned understanding of *taklīf* demonstrates. Yet concern for the nature and sources of true knowledge and the emphasis on the need to engage in independent interpretation of the sacred texts (*ijtihād*) are salient characteristics of Almohad legal and theological thought.¹⁰⁸ Al-Qurṭubī's non-conformism and his quest for true knowledge can thus be seen as part of a long Andalusī tradition,¹⁰⁹ but also as a product of trends that were well established in the specific—late-Almohad—intellectual milieu in which he became an adult person and an accomplished scholar. Al-Qurṭubī, like Averroes, is an illustration of the ways in which these efforts and concerns bore fruit.

106 See *al-Ṣifāt wa-mā warada fihā min al-āy wa-l-aḥādīth*, 19 and 10.

107 According to Gimaret, al-Walīd's list was adopted by a majority of the scholars who dealt with the issue of the best and most beautiful divine names after al-Ghazālī. See Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, 49, 65–66, quoting al-Ghazālī's *al-Maqṣad al-asnā*, 182, 189.

108 On Almohad, i.e. Ibn Tūmart's, epistemology see Nagel, "La destrucción de la ciencia de la *ṣarī'a*".

109 Future research will have to check whether or not al-Uqlishī and Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī adhered to this non-conformist stand on God's best and most beautiful names.

4 Conclusions

Regarding the issue of al-Ghazālī's reputation in al-Andalus, we would be tempted to conclude that fear of alternative forms of religious authority and their social and political consequences caused more distress and more verbal abuses among local scholars than the imminence of the Christian conquest of the Guadalquivir Valley. The extreme violence attributed to the Almohads and the radicalism of some of the doctrines with which they tried to legitimize their right not just to depose but to annihilate the Almoravids¹¹⁰ must have made the perspective of becoming subjects of a non-Muslim ruler, of leaving al-Andalus forever, or of risking their lives in battle, more acceptable than being ruled by Ibn Tūmart's successors. Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī personally involved himself in the defense of Seville against the Almohads—as he had done before against North Iberian Christians—and lost one of his sons in the siege. Subsequently he joined the delegation of Sevillian notables who travelled to Marrakech, the capital, to pay allegiance to the new Almohad caliph and died shortly afterwards in circumstances,¹¹¹ as obscure as those which saw the last days of 'Iyāḍ b. Mūsā, deported to Marrakech from his beloved Ceuta for having led a last, desperate and doomed to fail attempt to recover it for the Almoravids.¹¹² Ibn al-'Arabī may have overreacted against Ibn Ḥazm and al-Ghazālī, whose legacy he deemed to represent a dangerous threat. However, if a certain amount of opportunism on his part cannot be ruled out, it is also true that, like other scholars of his time, when it came to moving from words to actions in order to protect the political order he had contributed to consolidate, he took a step further and bet everything on a single card. It is probable that our Cordoban "quiet man" of the mid-13th century CE didn't take these factors into account when assessing Ibn al-'Arabī's excesses. Conversely, he did not hesitate to acknowledge the scholarly merits of his passionate predecessor when scientific and moral integrity advised him to do so; the frequent unqualified quotations from Ibn al-'Arabī that can be found in al-Qurṭubī's works provide an eloquent testimony of this unmistakable intellectual debt.

The case of Ibn Rushd al-Jadd shows that personal preferences or a given political and ideological setting cannot be argued to be the sole or main reasons explaining al-Qurṭubī's singular treatment of al-Ghazālī. Although Ibn Rushd

110 On the right to exert religiously motivated violence against the Almoravids which the Almohads claimed for themselves, see Peña and Vega, "La muerte dada en el Corán", 294–98.

111 See Serrano-Ruano, "El Corán como fuente de legislación", 259–60.

112 See Serrano-Ruano, "'Iyāḍ b. Mūsā", *BA*, 6:411–13.

al-Jadd's family did not belong to the Cordoban social elite, he found enough support with the Almoravids to develop his interest in rational disciplines like *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *kalām* as much as his still understudied talents allowed him to. It is true that many brilliant scholars did not have brilliant ancestors or descendants. Al-Qurṭubī is a good illustration in that regard. However, the Andalusī scholar who strived to convince his fellow Mālikīs to study legal methodology and Ash'arism and who posited that the first obligation of the believer is to learn and understand happened to be the grandfather of Averroes (i.e. Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafid), the most brilliant Andalusī rationalist of all times. In our view this is a remarkable fact that deserves to be stressed. Actually, the grandfather's insistence on the need to learn and exert the intellect in matters of faith is still scarcely known among students of Mālikism and Ash'arism; this credit is instead given to Ibn Tūmart. Moreover, from time to time, legal works by the grandfather continue to be attributed to the grandson and vice versa, and evidence that Averroes was well acquainted with and heavily influenced by his grandfather's thought can be found in the *Bidāyat al-muṭtahid* (e.g. the chapter on *ṣulḥ*). Also being inclined to serenity and composure on account of his erudition and his asceticism, Ibn Rushd al-Jadd is a telling example of how Ibn Tūmart's extremism ended up irritating even the most balanced spirits.

Al-Qurṭubī's stance should rather be connected to his training period during which he could probably enjoy enough time and freedom to read what he wanted, come to his own opinion regarding doctrines that had attracted to them the enraged opposition of earlier generations of scholars, excel in *ḥadīth* and Qur'ānic sciences,¹¹³ and become an ascetic without worldly or material ambitions who, by the time the Castilians entered in Cordoba, preferred to give up the comfort of remaining in his homeland and the likely emotional closeness he felt for it rather than become the subject of a non-Muslim ruler.¹¹⁴

As in the case of other important scholars of the period like Ibn Ṭufayl, Averroes or Maimonides, Almohadism becomes manifest in al-Qurṭubī's independence vis-à-vis established schools of thought such as Mālikism, Zāhirism

113 Qur'ān studies had received a considerable impulse already during the Almoravid period, which saw the emergence of the first two Andalusī authoritative commentaries of the Qur'ān, the already mentioned *Aḥkām* by Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī and the *Muḥarrar* by Ibn 'Aṭīyya (d. 541/1146). The extraordinary development of *ḥadīth* during the Almohad period, of which al-Qurṭubī is also a most distinguished representative, was actively supported by the rulers. On the latter development see Fierro, "Revolución y tradición", 147–53, 161–64.

114 On war as setting a "contaminated and impure scenario in which Islamic behavioural norms are no longer enforced and which must be left" and on the "purifying effect of travelling to the East" for Andalusī ascetics in times of unrest see Marín, "Los ulemas de Ilbīra", 199–200.

or Ash'arism. He is not a strict follower of any mystic, theologian, jurist or philosopher in particular. Rather he appears to align with Sunni *ḥadīth* experts who cultivated a blend of rationalism and asceticism, and were not scandalized by mysticism. They were close to Ash'arism, devoid of mahdist overtones, and disinterested in administrative and religio-legal positions. In their aspiration to join the ranks of "the righteous ones" (*ahl al-ḥaqq*), i.e. those who are not satisfied with received wisdom and strive to verify the truth of every religious purpose, they evoked an ascetic version of the non-conformist interpreters of the *sharī'a* to which Averroes had dedicated his aforementioned "The distinguished jurist's primer" (*Bidāyat al-mujtahid wa-nihāyat al-muqtaṣid*).

Al-Qurṭubī's non-conformism is not in keeping, however, with Almohad rejection of the existence of multiple truths—or rather, of different paths to reach the truth (*ikhtilāf*). He does not try to resolve this at any cost, nor is the Almohad caliph required for that purpose on the grounds of his impeccability (*iṣma*), since it is only God who "knows best" about everything dubious.¹¹⁵ Al-Qurṭubī reviled radicalism or excessive passion for things mundane such as egocentrism or intellectual supremacy; had he been asked, or had he felt the freedom to speak openly, he would probably have also rejected the excess in the Almohads' accusations of anthropomorphism against the Almoravids, their declaring the abolition of the *dhimma* covenant, or the obligation to subscribe—on pain of death—to the Almohad profession of faith. Ignorance, in his view, does not free from responsibility but does not render one an unbeliever, either. As to the uncertainties in Almohad doctrine on divine attributes, the case of al-Qurṭubī indicates that the scholars of his time were not obliged to find for their denial or pressed to hide their wholehearted support of their assertion.

The relative peace regarding the assimilation of al-Ghazālī's thought experienced during the Almohad period in al-Andalus did not survive into the Naṣrid period, nor, as we have seen, did the most idiosyncratic Almohad doctrines. However, their effect continued to be felt in new possibilities of combination such as monist Sufism with legal Zāhirism—as in the case of Ibn 'Arabī—, legal Zāhirism with Ash'arism,¹¹⁶ and the legal eclecticism to which the composition of Ibn Juzayy's (d. 731/1340) *al-Qawānīn al-fiqhiyya* appears to point.

¹¹⁵ This would add credit to the Almohad caliph Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'mūn's claim that the doctrine of the impeccability of the *mahdī* was no longer operative in his time, which moved him to declare it null and void. As has already been mentioned, this doctrine was reintroduced by al-Rashīd (See Fierro, "La religión", 448). It seems to have remained in force well into the Naṣrid period, as testified by Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) in *al-I'tisām*, 2:72. Also see Nwyia, *Ibn 'Abbad de Ronda* (1332–1390), xix, note 5.

¹¹⁶ See Serrano-Ruano, "Later Ash'arism in the Islamic West", 25.

Al-Qurṭubī's *Kitāb al-Asnā* first drew our attention because of the polemics around the issue of God's best and most beautiful names between Ibn Ḥazm, al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-'Arabī that it documents. The examination of this debate helps at expanding our present knowledge on both the reception of al-Ghazālī's thought and the development of Ash'arism in the pre-modern Islamic West. By placing that work in its cultural context we have also managed to shed light on the Andalusī traditionists of Almohad times from whose ranks emerged the figure of al-Qurṭubī, observing their relationship with other more or less identifiable local groups (e.g., the Mālikī-Ash'arīs, the Zāhiris, the *falāsifa* and the Sufis) as well as their level of commitment to official religious doctrine. Our conclusions provide safer grounds for further analysis of the doctrine and its enforcement.

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Ash'arism in the Ḥafṣid Era

Jan Thiele

To my father Wilfried Thiele



1 Introduction

The well-known historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), who was born in 732/1332 in the North African city of Tunis, provided in his *Muqaddima* an account of the historical development of Ash'arī *kalām* that has significantly shaped the school's perception in modern scholarship. In fact, this account is also to some extent echoed in the title and approach of the present volume on “later Ash'arism”. Ibn Khaldūn divided the school's historical development along a methodological shift into two main periods. Among the representatives of the “methodology of the earlier” Ash'arīs he counts the generations from the school's founder al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935–6) down to al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). In Ibn Khaldūn's narrative, these generations were instrumental in establishing the school as the most influential strand in *kalām*. Yet, Ibn Khaldūn continues, the arguments of these early Ash'arīs were methodologically weak: because of their opposition to *falsafa*, they rejected the powerful reasoning of syllogistic logic. This eventually changed with al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), the first of Ibn Khaldūn's representatives of the “methodology of the later ones”. They appropriated syllogistic logic in their teaching, and their increasing engagement with *falsafa* finally lead them to disagree with the arguments of the “earlier” Ash'arīs. Al-Ghazālī was followed by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210)—who, according to Ibn Khaldūn, played an outstanding role in the rise of logic. He and the following generations of Ash'arīs combined *falsafa* and *kalām*, to the extent that the two disciplines were no longer distinguishable.¹

Also in the *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldūn briefly narrates when and how the writings of one of the major representatives of the “later methodology”, namely Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, were transmitted to the Islamic west. According to his account, they first entered his homeland Ifrīqiya (a territory that corresponds

1 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 3:49–54, 143–46.

roughly to modern-day Tunisia, the eastern part of Algeria and the west of Libya) over the course of the seventh/thirteenth century and were then transmitted over several generations to Ibn Khaldūn's own teacher, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Salām (d. 749/1348).² For Ibn Khaldūn, the discipline of *kalām* was no longer useful when he wrote in the eighth/fourteenth century. As he writes in his *Muqaddima*, it had completely lost its relevance for the Muslim community. For him, *kalām* had merely the function of defending Muslim beliefs against innovators and refuting heretics by adopting their speculative arguments and turning them against these groups.³ But its own success, Ibn Khaldūn says, eventually rendered the science of *kalām* obsolete:

In general, it must be known that this science—the science of speculative theology—is not something that is necessary to the contemporary student. Heretics and innovators have been destroyed. The orthodox religious leaders have given us protection against heretics and innovators in their systematic works and treatments. Logical arguments were needed only when they defended and supported (their own views with them). Now, all that remains of them is a certain amount of discussion, from most of whose ambiguities and inferences the Creator can be considered to be free.⁴

Ibn Khaldūn's picture of the apologetic nature and dialectical methodology of *kalām* has survived in seminal modern studies on *kalām*. This contributed to the claim that *kalām* soon entered a long phase of stagnation, in which scholars only reiterated what earlier generations had said long before. Recently, however, this picture has been increasingly questioned by scholarship that attempts to show that *kalām* was in fact a demonstrative rather than a dialectical science and never lost its intellectual creativity.⁵

Ibn Khaldūn's account of the irrelevance of *kalām* in his day might also have influenced an earlier attempt to draw a general picture of *kalām* in Ifrīqiya

2 For the passage in Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima*, see below fn. 78.

3 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 3:34, 155.

4 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 3:54 (the transliteration of Arabic in Rosenthal's translation has not been adapted to this volume's system). As A. Shihadeh has argued (Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī", 142–48; Shihadeh, "Al-Ghazālī and Kalām") the mere dialectical and apologetic function of *kalām* had been affirmed before Ibn Khaldūn by al-Ghazālī. Yet the significant difference between the two is that al-Ghazālī still felt the need to defend what he considered "orthodox" doctrines against their detractors and attempted to develop a form of theology that is superior to earlier *kalām* works. So, if al-Ghazālī considered *kalām* to have a limited function, he did not regard it as obsolete.

5 See El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 173–75 with further references.

under the Ḥafṣids, that is, the dynasty that ruled during Ibn Khaldūn's lifetime. In his seminal history of political, social, cultural and intellectual developments in the Ḥafṣid state, R. Brunschvig describes scholarship in *kalām* as a marginal and somewhat irrelevant field:

[The study of theology], which was never encouraged by the Mālikīs, was restricted to a small elite; they primarily used the Imām al-Ḥaramayn [al-Juwaynī's] *Irshād*, the *Mustaṣfā* by his prominent student al-Ghazālī and the more recent works by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.⁶

And some pages later he appeals to the narrative of the stagnation of *kalām*:

Theology [...] did not play a significant role: medieval Ifrīqians were only little enthusiastic about theological speculation, specifically after the disappearance of the "unitarian" [i.e. Almohad—JT] doctrine; one of the rare works to be mentioned on this subject is without doubt the commentary on the *Irshād* of Imām al-Ḥaramayn [al-Juwaynī] by the 13th century Tunisian 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Ibrāhīm al-Qurashī, or Ibn Bazīza.⁷

In this paper, I will attempt to reassess the activity in the field of *kalām* in the Ḥafṣid era. The rise of this dynasty coincided with the end of a peculiar period in the history of the Islamic west. They were preceded by the Almohads, a Berber movement that had established a caliphate over the entire Maghrib and al-Andalus and that had claimed political and religious authority. They propagated their theological doctrines in forms of short creeds—attributed to the movement's founder, the infallible and rightly guided *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130)—and every believer was obliged to memorise them.

Much work needs to be done to improve our understanding of the position and role of Ash'arī theologians under the Almohads. What can be said is that, despite significant doctrinal differences with official Almohad teachings, Ash'arī theology flourished in this period alongside the much better known contemporary philosophers. One of the period's most outstanding representatives, the philosopher Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), even critically engaged with Ash'arism, for example in his refutation of al-Ghazālī's attack against *falsafa*, entitled *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, and in several shorter treatises.⁸

⁶ Brunschvig, *La berbérie orientale*, 2:365.

⁷ Brunschvig, *La berbérie orientale*, 2:376.

⁸ These texts include *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla fī 'aqā'id al-milla*, *Faṣl al-maqāl* and *Risālat al-ihdā'.*

The end of the Almohad caliphate also abolished the political unification of the Islamic west, which disintegrated into four independent states. The south of the Iberian peninsula was governed by the Naṣrids of Granada, the west of North Africa was ruled by the Marīnids with Fez as their capital, Tlemcen became the capital of the 'Abdalwādids and the Ḥafṣids ruled over Ifrīqiya. The Ḥafṣids were Berbers and descendants of a close companion of Ibn Tūmart and therefore claimed to be the legitimate successors of the Almohads. They established their new capital in Tunis, and the city soon eclipsed Ifrīqiya's traditional intellectual centre, the city of Kairouan, where the history of Maghribi Ash'arism had begun. Tunis attracted an important number of Andalusī immigrants, who fled from the Castilian *Reconquista*.

In the following, I will outline the teachings and writings of some Ash'arī theologians who worked in Ḥafṣid Ifrīqiya. I do not claim to map the activities of Ash'arī scholarship in Ḥafṣid times in an exhaustive fashion. My approach will consist primarily in discussing a selection of *kalām* works written in Ifrīqiya between the seventh and eighth/thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁹ On the basis of these texts, I will query Brunschvig's picture of *kalām* as an irrelevant and stagnating scholarly discipline. I will argue that Ifrīqiyan theologians engaged with a significant range of intellectual strands: to a rather limited extent, with specifically western Islamic traditions; with "earlier" Ash'arīs like al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī; with the "Avicennized" form of Ash'arism promulgated by al-Rāzī and his followers; and I will finally point to some examples that show an increasing interest in Aristotelian logic.

2 Ash'arī Scholarship in the Ḥafṣid Period

The earliest authors whose works will be discussed in this paper still experienced the end of Almohad rule and the rise of new dynasties in the Islamic west. One of them was Muḥammad b. Abī l-Khaṭṭāb b. Khalīl al-Sakūnī, whose

⁹ This means that I will rarely draw on biographical reports. In fact, an important number of seminal studies on Ash'arism in the Islamic west rely almost exclusively on such biographical reports, and more specifically, on reports about the transmission of texts. This is not unproblematic, because the mere fact that a specific scholar studied Ash'arī works reveals only little about this scholar's own theological teaching—and may even be insufficient to establish his adherence to Ash'arism. As a starting point for my selection of Ash'arī texts from the Ḥafṣid era, Maribel Fierro kindly provided me access to her still unpublished database project *Historia de los autores y transmisores del Occidente Islámico* (HATO1).

kunya is given either as Abū ‘Abdallāh or Abū l-Ḥusayn.¹⁰ He was born in al-Andalus and belonged to an important family, the Banū Khalīl, that originated from the city of Niebla (Labla in Arabic). His family was based in Seville. Following the Castilian conquest of the city in 646/1248, Muḥammad al-Sakūnī left the Iberian peninsula and emigrated to North Africa. He eventually settled in Tunis, like many other immigrants from al-Andalus.

One of Muḥammad al-Sakūnī’s *kalām* works, a relatively short treatise entitled *Arba‘ūn mas‘ala fī uṣūl al-dīn*, can be dated after his arrival in North Africa.¹¹ It is written as an introduction into the basic principles of theology and—as the title indicates—it is divided into forty “questions”. Many of these are introduced as beliefs he encountered in discussions with “common people” (*al-‘amma*) or “ignorami” (*al-juhāl*, *al-jahala*).¹² Obviously, the work was not written for an expert audience, but rather was intended to educate these *‘awāmm* and dissuade them from heretical beliefs. Muḥammad al-Sakūnī’s motivation to do so becomes clear from the work’s introduction and its first chapter. Here he addresses the question of why it is not sufficient for a believer (*mu‘min*) to openly profess that there is no God but God, that Muḥammad is His messenger and then to fulfil God’s obligations. Rather, he claims that engaging in theological reasoning (*uṣūl al-dīn*) is a necessary exercise. Relying on al-Bāqillānī and al-Ash‘arī, he posits that ritual practices are no way to attain certain knowledge (*ma‘rifa*) of God, and that the outward profession of faith cannot replace knowledge either (*man yaqūlu bi-lisānihi wa-laysa bi-qalbihi ‘ilm*). Yet, Muḥammad al-Sakūnī continues, all authorities agree that certain knowledge of God is obligatory upon any morally responsible person (*mukallaf*), and since such knowledge of God can only be acquired rationally, our first obligation consists in reflecting about what is necessary, possible and impossible with regard to God (*mā yajibu wa-yajūzu wa-yastahīlu fī ḥaqqihi subḥānahu*).¹³

Ash‘arī theologians, specifically up to the period of al-Ghazālī, generally agreed that rational reflection was the only valid means to acquiring certain knowledge of God, but they disagreed over the precise implications of this doctrine. Specifically, they asked whether the obligation to engage in rational

10 For his biography and work, see the editor’s French introduction in al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Uyūn al-munāzarāt*, 22–25; A. Rodríguez Figueroa’s article “Ibn Jalīl al-Sakūnī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh” in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, 3:599–602 (no. 679); Zahrī, *al-Maṣādir al-Maghribiyya lil-‘aqida al-Ash‘ariyya*, 1:203–15.

11 For the dating of the work, see the editor’s introduction to al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba‘ūn mas‘ala*, 13.

12 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba‘ūn mas‘ala*, 59, 61, 69, 71–72.

13 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba‘ūn mas‘ala*, 53–56.

reflection should be considered as an individual obligation. The discussion rose out of the concern that people without sufficient intellectual capacities—and this could possibly include any non-expert in *kalām*—would have to be treated as an unbeliever.¹⁴ Since *Arba'ūn mas'ala* was written in response to heretical beliefs that Muḥammad al-Sakūnī found specifically among such non-experts, it would seem that he rather tended to regard rational reflection about God as every individual person's duty rather than a collective obligation. However, his main concern is not to declare others as unbelievers (*takaffara*)¹⁵ (and this stance actually reflects the general carefulness among Ash'arī theologians regarding *takfīr*), but rather people's fate in the afterlife. Relying again on al-Ash'arī and al-Bāqillānī, Muḥammad al-Sakūnī claims that one can either be knowing or ignorant, and that whoever dies without knowing God will be doomed at the Last Judgement.¹⁶ The function of *Arba'ūn mas'ala* would thus seem to be to save the common people's afterlife by making them acquainted with the necessary foundations for acquiring certain knowledge of God, so that they can fulfil their obligation.¹⁷

A somewhat remarkable feature for a text of this introductory level is that Muḥammad al-Sakūnī introduces some elementary considerations about analogical reasoning (*qiyās*). He highlights that drawing inferences from the visible realm to the unknown (*ṭard al-shāhid ghā'ibān*)—that is between the created world and God—is a major foundation of theological reasoning (*qā'ida 'aẓīma*). Yet he also warns that several formal conditions have to be fulfilled in order to draw valid conclusions.¹⁸ Further on in his treatise, Muḥammad al-Sakūnī briefly treats these formal aspects by introducing several technical terms to describe logical relations.¹⁹ Although these terms belong

14 For this discussion see Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqīd*".

15 See al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 72, where he refuses to declare the "Qadariyya" as unbelievers because of their heretic beliefs.

16 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 57–59.

17 The text thus examines how the existence of God can be proved from the createdness of the world (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 56–57), and it treats such topics as God's omnipotence (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 59–60), His will (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 61–62), whether or not He has a location (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 62–63), beatific vision (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 63–64), the eternity of God's speech (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 64), whether or not saints (*al-awliyā'*) are infallible (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 65–66), determinism (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 66–67), occasionalism and the term of God's "habit" (*'āda*) (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 69–70) or the meaning of corporeal and spatial descriptions of God (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 70–71).

18 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 64–65.

19 More precisely, he discusses the terms "proof" (*dalīl*), "condition" (*shart*), "cause" (*'illa*) and "definition" (*hadd*) and describes them as follows: Whenever A is said to be the *dalīl*

to the analytical framework of the *mutakallimūn*'s traditional analogical (that is, non-syllogistic) form of reasoning, one is reminded of the project of the highly influential ninth/fifteenth-century Ash'arī theologian from Tilimsān, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490): for him the use of demonstrative syllogistic arguments was fundamental even in the shortest of his educational creeds, and he asked his non-expert audience to know at least one proof per article of doctrine.²⁰ Indeed, the fact that these two theologians insisted not only on every adult's religious duty to demonstrate God's existence rationally, but also on teaching sound methodologies of demonstrative reasoning to establish God's existence in texts specifically addressed to ordinary people might be sheer coincidence, unless it could be conclusively shown that al-Sanūsī relied in some way on the work of Muḥammad al-Sakūnī.

Another short work that was most probably written by Muḥammad al-Sakūnī and that is available in print is a commentary on the short creed—*Murshida* or *Tawḥīd al-bārī*²¹—attributed to the founder of the Almohad movement, Ibn Tūmart.²¹ The commentary provides no evidence as to when it was written, and so it is possible that Muḥammad al-Sakūnī wrote it in late Almohad Seville. Yet it is no less improbable that he composed it only after his arrival in Ḥafṣid Tunis: as mentioned above, the Ḥafṣids did not break radically with the Almohads, but rather claimed to be their legitimate successors. Muḥammad al-Sakūnī interprets the *Murshida* as a creed that is fully consistent with Ash'arī doctrines. It is consequently a work that simply makes sense in a Maghribi context, where Ash'arī theologians had to cope with the doctrines of a supposedly infallible spiritual leader that were not entirely compatible with their own teachings. To be sure, unlike Ibn Tūmart's longer *Aqida*,

of B, the universal affirmative is also true, and the *dalil* is "invariant" (*muṭṭarid*). However, the proposition does not convert to a universal affirmative (*ghayr mun'akis*) (e.g. all acts necessitate an agent to be present, but vice versa the existence of an agent does not make it necessary for him to act). Whenever A is the condition of B, the affirmative is not universal (*ghayr muṭṭarid*), but it converts to a universal affirmative, so conditions are said to be *mun'akis* (e.g. some livings are knowing—or not all livings are knowing—but all knowings are living). Whenever A is either the *'illa* or definition for B, the proposition A is B is a universal affirmative (*muṭṭarid*) and it converts to a universal affirmative (*mun'akis*) (e.g. whoever possesses knowledge is knowing and whoever is knowing has knowledge; all knowledge is *ma'rifa* and all *ma'rifa* is knowledge). See al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, 73.

20 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 175–88; El-Rouayheb, "Theology and Logic", 425–26; Olson, "Early Modern Theology in the Islamic West".

21 For a discussion of this text's attribution to Muḥammad al-Sakūnī, see the editor's introduction to al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Sharḥ Murshidat*, 5–6; Zahrī, *al-Maṣādir al-Maghribiyya lil-'aqida al-Ash'ariyya*, 1:214–15.

the *Murshida* does not contain any theological claims that are difficult to harmonise with Ash'arī doctrines.²² Accordingly, Muḥammad al-Sakūnī interprets the *Murshida* as a profession of God's oneness, His life, eternity, omniscience, His "necessary existence" (*wājib al-wujūd*) and omnipotence. The latter principle, Muḥammad al-Sakūnī claims, was violated by the Mu'tazilis with their belief in human free will. Further on, we find in the commentary the principle of theological voluntarism, of which the Ash'arīs also approved: God imposes obligations upon man and judges him for fulfilling or not fulfilling them, but He Himself is not subject to commands and prohibitions. Finally, Muḥammad al-Sakūnī characterises Ibn Tūmart's creed as a balanced position between the corporealism (*tajsīm*) of the anthropomorphists and the doctrine of those who deny any attributes to God (*ta'ṭīl*): this, Muḥammad al-Sakūnī says, is expressed in the *Murshida* by the denial of divine location, the claim that God is timeless and transcends man's imagination in that He in no way resembles His creation.²³ It is only at the beginning of the text that Muḥammad al-Sakūnī points to a subtle disagreement—or rather offers precision with regard to the *Murshida's* claim that it is every morally responsible person's obligation to have certain knowledge of God (*wājib 'alā kull mukallaf ma'rifat Allāh*). In fact, the *Murshida* actually leaves open what appears to be of central concern to Muḥammad al-Sakūnī: namely the question what man's first obligation consists of, precisely. In accordance with the position already found in *Arba'ūn mas'ala*, he identifies this obligation with rational reflection (*naẓar*), which leads to knowledge of God and consequently must be a legal obligation (*farḍ*) incumbent upon any adult.²⁴

Muḥammad al-Sakūnī furthermore wrote a commentary on a versification of al-Juwaynī's *Kitāb al-Irshād* by Abū l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf b. Mūsā al-Ḍarīr (d. 520/1126)—a theologian of Andalusian origin who lived in Marrakesh—entitled *Sharḥ al-Tanbīh wa-l-Irshād fī 'ilm al-i'tiqād* or *Sharḥ Manẓūmat al-Ḍarīr fī l-tawḥīd*. The work, which has survived in several manuscripts, makes substantial use of al-Bāqillānī's *Hidāyat al-mustarshidīn*.²⁵ He consequently

22 The longer *Aqida* does not appeal to the Almohad theory of the imamate, which radically broke with Sunni practice. However, it includes other doctrines that were opposed to Ash'arī teachings, such as the denial of co-eternal attributes in God, or the claim that any investigation into the nature of God's attributes and of beatific vision must be avoided (i.e. the so-called *bi-lā kayf* approach); for relevant passages in the *Aqida* see Luciani, *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert*, 337–39.

23 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Sharḥ Murshidat*, 9–21.

24 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Sharḥ Murshidat*, 10.

25 Three MSS of the text are listed in the article "Ibn Jalil al-Sakūnī, Abū 'Abd Allāh", in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, 3:600. I consulted a fourth manuscript, described by Zahri and Būkārī, *Fahras*, 2:519 (MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya, no. 12995; I thank Caitlyn

contributed to a large body of Maghribi commentaries on al-Juwaynī's theological *summa*.²⁶ There is further evidence for Muḥammad al-Sakūnī's close familiarity with al-Bāqillānī's multi-volume theological work: an inventory of the library of Kairouan's Great Mosque, dated 693/1293–4, records a commentary of al-Bāqillānī's *al-Hidāya* by Muḥammad al-Sakūnī.²⁷ The commentary itself appears to have been an important work of 16(?) volumes. Considering that this work is not known to have survived—and this is also the case with the author's unfinished refutation of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī's famous exegetical work *al-Kashshāf*—I would be wary of giving a more general characterisation of this author. Our available information suggest that he developed his theology primarily in the framework of the doctrines of such fourth to fifth/tenth to eleventh century Ash'arīs as al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī—whose teachings were indeed not homogenous, but nevertheless remained distinct from the methodology of Ash'arīs who, from the sixth/twelfth century onwards, increasingly engaged with Avicennian philosophy. From Muḥammad al-Sakūnī's short treatises, it appears that it was of central concern to him to teach the non-experts some basic notions of *kalām*, something that appears consistent with his insistence upon every *mukallaf's* obligation to acquire knowledge of God by sound rational reflection.

Another immigrant from al-Andalus who should be treated here is Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Lablī al-Fihri (d. 691/1292), originally from Niebla.²⁸ He received his early education in his homeland, before he came via Ceuta (Sabta) and Bijāya to Tunis. He did not remain in the Ḥafṣid capital, but travelled further east. First, he studied in Alexandria with the Shāfi'ī scholar Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Tilimsānī al-Fihri (d. 658/1260), whose *kalām* works include commentaries on al-Juwaynī's *al-Luma'* and al-Rāzī's *al-Ma'ālim fī uṣūl al-dīn*.²⁹ Later,

Olson for providing me with a copy of this manuscript), who point to the frequent quotations of al-Bāqillānī's *al-Hidāya*. Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Darī's *al-Tanbih* is published.

26 Earlier Maghribi commentaries on al-Juwaynī's *Irshād* include Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Māzarī's *al-Mihād fī sharḥ al-Irshād*, 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Fazārī's (d. 557/1162) *Minhāj al-sadād fī sharḥ al-Irshād*, Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf Ibn Dihāq's (or Ibn Mar'a) (d. 611/1214–5) *Nukat al-Irshād*. Later on, Maghribi scholars continued to write commentaries; see also below Ibn Bazīza's commentary entitled *al-Is'ād fī sharḥ al-Irshād*. For an overview of Maghribi commentaries on al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*, see also Iḥnāna, *Taṭawwur al-madhab al-Ash'arī*, 185–96.

27 Shabbūh, "Sijill", 369 (under the title *Talkhīṣ al-kifāya min Kitāb al-Hidāya*); see also GAS 1:609, no. 7, and Hassan Ansari's article "al-Bāqillānī" in *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, 4:359–60.

28 For his biography see Maḥfūz, *Tarājim*, 4:202–6, no. 486; A. García Sanjuán's article "al-Lablī, Aḥmad" in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, 6:460–63, no. 1501.

29 The two works are edited: see Ibn al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Ibn al-Tilimsānī 'alā Luma' al-adilla* and Ibn al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Ma'ālim*.

Abū Ja'far al-Lablī continued his studies with one of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's students, Shams al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Khusrawshāhī (d. 652/1254),³⁰ in Cairo and Damascus. We do not possess any substantial original work in *kalām* by Abū Ja'far al-Lablī. He himself mentions that he wrote a refutation of the famous Ḥāhirī scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), who happened to come from the same town as al-Lablī.³¹ The work that contains this information, the *Fihrist*, is of some relevance in our context, as is the case with his second work, the *Fahrassa*.³² The two books are autobiographical descriptions of al-Lablī's education (the genre of *fahāris* is very common in the Islamic west and has a similar function as *ijāzāt* ["licenses to transmit"] in the Islamic east). The two *fahāris* contain significant information about Abū Ja'far al-Lablī's studies in *kalām*. Since he returned to the Ḥaḥṣid capital and taught there until the end of his life, the two works are a valuable source for the transmission of *kalām* texts in seventh/thirteenth-century Tunis, including those by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Abū Ja'far al-Lablī also wrote a short creed. Yet, the authenticity of a published version of a creed attributed to him is not certain, because the identical text was also attributed to a contemporary theologian from Tunis, Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Marjānī (d. 699/1300).³³

A third author who experienced the end of the Almohads and the rise of the Ḥaḥṣids was Abū Fāris 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Ibrāhīm al-Qurashī, known as Ibn Bazīza (d. 662/1264), who was from Tunis.³⁴ Ibn Bazīza wrote works in several disciplines, including *kalām*. In this field, he wrote a commentary on al-Juwaynī's *al-Irshād* entitled *al-Is'ād fī sharḥ al-Irshād*. With some occasional references to such scholars as the mystic Ibn Barrajan³⁵ or the philosophers Ibn Ṭufayl³⁶ and Ibn Rushd, the *Is'ād* appears to be one of the rare sources from the Ḥaḥṣid period that still engages—at least marginally—with specifically western Islamic intellectual strands.³⁷ Ibn Bazīza quotes Ibn Rushd in the context of his denial

30 On al-Khusrawshāhī, see Endress, "Reading Avicenna in the *madrasa*", 406–7.

31 Schmidtke, "Ibn Ḥazm's Sources on Ash'arism and Mu'tazilism", 383, quoting al-Lablī, *Fihrist al-Lablī*, 82–83; the work was entitled *Risāla fī l-radd 'alā Ibn Ḥazm* and was specifically directed against Ibn Ḥazm's *Kitāb al-Fiṣal*.

32 al-Lablī, *Fihrist al-Lablī* and *Fahrassat Abī Ja'far al-Lablī*.

33 The creed has been printed in *Fahrassat Abī Ja'far al-Lablī*, 129–31 (as a work of al-Lablī) and in Ḥammādī, *Maqālāt 'ulamā' al-bilād al-Tūnisīyya*, 75–83 (as a work of al-Marjānī). For al-Marjānī, see Maḥfūz, *Tarājīm*, 4:300–1, no. 514.

34 There are variations regarding Ibn Bazīza's death date; I am following the conclusion of Basrūr and al-Suhayli in their introduction to Ibn Bazīza, *al-Is'ād*, 15–16. For Ibn Bazīza's biography see furthermore Maḥfūz, *Tarājīm*, 1:127–29, no. 39.

35 Ibn Bazīza, *al-Is'ād*, 551.

36 Ibn Bazīza, *al-Is'ād*, 505, with mention of Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān*.

37 Ibn Bazīza, *al-Is'ād*, 225–26.

of God's corporeality, and more specifically his position in *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla fi 'aqā'id al-milla*, a polemic against the methods and doctrines of the *mutakallimūn* and particularly the Ash'arīs.³⁸ Ibn Rushd claims in his text that corporeality in God should neither be denied nor affirmed.³⁹ His main concern was that the *mutakallimūn*'s denial of God's corporeality and spatiality would conceal, rather than clarify, the truth and therefore lead the common people into heresy. Ibn Bazīza wrote an additional—apparently lost—work related to this topic, where he interprets anthropomorphic descriptions of God in a figurative sense. One can only speculate whether or not he further engaged critically with Ibn Rushd's *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla* in this work. The question cannot be resolved on the basis of some few quotations in *al-Is'ād*, which cite the work in a longer (entitled *Minhāj al-'awārif ilā rūḥ al-ma'ārif*) and a shorter version (entitled *Īdāh al-sabīl ilā manāhī al-ta'wīl*).⁴⁰

Ibn Bazīza's commentary is not uncritical of al-Juwaynī's theological positions in *al-Irshād*. By way of example, I mention here Ibn Bazīza's opposition to the so-called theory of *aḥwāl* (literally "states").⁴¹ This theory was an attempt to explain the ontological status of the properties of beings (such as the property "blackness" of the entity "black"), and it had implications on various levels of al-Juwaynī's teaching, including metaphysics, epistemology and also his treatment of the problem of God's attributes. Fundamentally, the theory posits that properties are not "entities" or "things" (*ashyā'* or *dhawāt*; "entities" or "things" include only God, atoms [*jawāhir*] and accidents [*a'rāḍ*]). Nonetheless, the theory conceives of properties as metaphysically real, but this reality is not described by either existence or non-existence (because existence only applies to "entities" or "things"). In his *al-Irshād*, al-Juwaynī settled on the theory of *aḥwāl*, but the doctrine was never undisputed among Ash'arī theologians. In the Islamic east, only two Ash'arī theologians are actually reported to have been proponents of the theory: apart from al-Juwaynī, al-Bāqillānī also approved of it in later works.⁴² Unlike in the east, the theory of *aḥwāl* appears to have been more widely accepted in the Maghrib. For example, a highly influential and

38 Maḥfūz, *Tarājim*, 1:128 concludes from this passage (*wa-lahu fi kitābihi l-ṣaghīr alladhī sammāhu Manāhij al-adilla mawāḍi' nabbahnā 'alayhā*) that Ibn Bazīza wrote a separate refutation entitled *Tanbīh 'alā mawāḍi' min Manāhij al-adilla*; see also Iḥnāna, *Taṭawwur al-madhab al-Ash'arī*, 192, 214; Zahrī, *al-Maṣādir al-Maghribiyya lil-'aqida al-Ash'ariyya*, 1:202.

39 The passage quoted by Ibn Bazīza is found in Ibn Rushd's *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla* (Müller, *Philosophie und Theologie von Averroes*, 60).

40 Ibn Bazīza, *al-Is'ād*, 231, 233, 363, 388.

41 The discussion is found in Ibn Bazīza, *al-Is'ād*, 302–18.

42 For al-Juwaynī's theory of *aḥwāl* and his opponents' arguments see Benevich, "The Classical Ash'ari Theory of *aḥwāl*". It should be noted that opposition to the theory of

significantly later Maghribi proponent was al-Sanūsī.⁴³ In addition, some of the texts discussed below also endorsed the theory of *aḥwāl*. In his discussion of the *aḥwāl*, Ibn Bazīza mentions al-Shahrastānī's (d. 548/1153) critique and also cites the counter-arguments advanced by an Egyptian commentator of al-Juwaynī's *al-Irshād*, the Alexandrian Taqī l-Dīn al-Muqtaraḥ (d. 612/1215): his main objection is that the *aḥwāl* are undefinable and have therefore to be denied. The reasoning behind this is that al-Juwaynī's theory itself claims that the definition of objects consists in a *ḥāl* (namely the object's specific characteristics that distinguish it from other things [*khāṣṣiyyatuhu allatī yatamayyazu bihā 'an ḡhayrihi*]), and so defining a *ḥāl* by a *ḥāl* would result in an infinite regress—an argument that F. Benevich has called the problem of "ontological explosion".⁴⁴

Ibn Bazīza's body of works also includes a still unedited commentary upon *al-'Aqīda al-burhāniyya*, a popular short creed by a scholar from Fez named Abū 'Amr al-Salālījī (d. 564/1169, 574/1179 or 594/1197–8). *Al-'Aqīda al-burhāniyya* is a work that depends heavily on al-Juwaynī's *al-Irshād*—some pre-modern scholars even described it as a brief summary (*mukhtaṣar*) of al-Juwaynī's work.⁴⁵ Furthermore, an apparently lost work entitled *Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḡusnā* should also have been relevant for Ibn Bazīza's activity in *kalām*. Like his contemporary Muḡammad al-Sakūnī, Ibn Bazīza engaged with al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf*, which he compares with Ibn 'Aṭiyya's (d. 542/1147) *al-Muḡarrar al-wajīz*, in a work entitled *al-Bayān wa-l-taḡṣīl al-muṭli' alā 'ulūm al-tanzīl*.⁴⁶

A quite prolific author of *kalām* works from the following generation was Muḡammad al-Sakūnī's son Abū 'Alī 'Umar al-Sakūnī (d. 717/1317). The place and date of his birth is unknown, and so it remains unclear whether he was born in al-Andalus or only after his father's departure from the Iberian

aḥwāl was also expressed by commentators of *al-Irshād* in the Islamic east, including al-Juwaynī's own student Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. 512/1118).

43 Olson, "Early Modern Theology in the Islamic West". An early example of an *aḥwāl* proponent is a fifth/eleventh-century commentary upon al-Bāqillānī's *al-Tamhīd* by the Maghribi scholar 'Abd al-Jalīl al-Dībājī (see Ansari and Thiele, "Discussing al-Bāqillānī's Theology in the Maghrib", 147–54).

44 For the parallel section see al-Muqtaraḥ, *Sharḥ al-Irshād*, 1:306–43.

45 See al-Salālījī, *Aqīda*, 51, quoting Ibn Rushayd al-Fihri al-Sabti (d. 721/1321) (*Mil' al-'ayba*, 2:226); *Fahrasat Abī Ja'far al-Lablī*, 88; Thiele, "Facing the Mahdī's True Belief".

46 The work has survived in manuscript form in Fez, Qarawiyyīn library, no. 28 (*non vidī*); see the description in al-Fāsi al-Fihri, *Fihris makḥṭūṭāt*, 1:72–73. For a more exhaustive list of Ibn Bazīza's body of work in various disciplines of knowledge, see the editors' introduction to Ibn Bazīza, *al-Is'ād*, 19–20.

peninsula. Historical sources only confirm that Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī lived and died in Tunis.⁴⁷

His surviving texts draw a picture of a scholar who was primarily concerned with the field of *kalām*. As was the case with his father, several of his works were written for common people and had an educational purpose: in a number of his texts we can read that he wrote them in an attempt to present the doctrines and rationale of Ash‘arī *kalām* in an accessible fashion.

One such text is a short work entitled *Laḥn al-‘awāmm fī-mā yata‘allaqu bi-‘ilm al-kalām*.⁴⁸ It consists of a collection of sayings and common beliefs, which, according to Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī, echo the teachings of such heresies as the *falāsifa*, the mystics or the Mu‘tazilis, and consequently show how deeply their misbeliefs are rooted among ordinary people.⁴⁹ Examples for these supposedly widespread heretical beliefs include the belief in God’s corporeality and spatiality; conceptions of God that are either anthropomorphism or agnosticism; the belief in causality, be it in form of causal chains or of natural causality (for example the saying “God creates for everything a cause [*sababan*]” would imply the existence of secondary causes and an infinite regress of causes, something that contradicts Ash‘arī occasionalism); the idea—associated with the *falāsifa*—that the world is eternal; or the claim—associated with the Mu‘tazila—that man possesses creative power, something that violates the principle of God’s omnipotence.

The work ends with a list of books that his audience should avoid and others that al-Sakūnī recommends for further instruction. According to Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī, all those works whose authors claim to have access to secret or even revealed knowledge are forbidden. He therefore criticises scholars giving their works such titles as *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (“The keys to the hidden”—it is not clear whether or not Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī refers to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s homonymous exegesis of the Qur‘ān). The remaining books that fall into this first category appear to have been rejected by Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī because of their mystical inclination: he advises against sections from al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, his *Nafkh [al-rūḥ] wa-l-taswīya*, and the opening section of *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*; Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’s two works *Qūt al-qulūb* and *al-Hidāya*; the books of the Andalusī mystic Ibn Masarra (against whom Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī recommends the refutation of the Mālikī jurist Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī

47 For his biography, see the editor’s French introduction to al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *‘Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 25–29; Maḥfūz, *Tarājim*, 3:47–51, no. 244; and A. Rodríguez Figueroa’s article “Ibn Jalil al-Sakūnī, Abū ‘Alī” in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, 3:602–6 (no. 681).

48 The work was first edited by S. Ghurāb (Ghurāb, “al-Sakūnī: *Laḥn al-‘awāmm*”).

49 For an overview of the topics covered by this work, see Latham, “The content of the *Laḥn al-‘awāmm*”.

[d. 386/996], whose authority was confirmed by al-Bāqillānī); and the books of another famous Andalusī mystic, namely Ibn Barrajān. The works of Mundhir b. Saʿīd al-Ballūṭī (d. 355/966) and of al-Zamakhsharī are rejected by Abū ʿAlī al-Sakūnī because of their Muʿtazilī inclination—the association of the former with Muʿtazilism is historically questionable, but nonetheless frequent in the Islamic west.⁵⁰ Abū ʿAlī al-Sakūnī then advises against a quite heterogeneous list of authors and works: the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*; the books of the “atheist philosophers” (*al-falāsifa al-mulḥidīn*); a group that comprises such early Muʿtazilīs as al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869), Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d. between 220 and 230/835 and 845), the fourth/tenth century Ibn al-Rāwandī (whom the Muʿtazilīs themselves declared a heretic), “al-Nāshī” (that is, Abū l-ʿAbbās ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Anbārī [d. 293/906]), the philologist and presumable Khārijī Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā (d. 209/824–5); then the books of the philosopher al-Kindī and sections of the books of some “later philosophers”; *Khalʿ al-naʿlayn* by the sixth/twelfth-century mystic Ibn Qasī; the books of Ibn Ḥazm (who, according to Abū ʿAlī al-Sakūnī, wrote about theology without mastering the field); the works of Averroes (Abū ʿAlī al-Sakūnī adds that Averroes’ grandfather, Ibn Rushd al-Jadd [d. 520/1126], was, however, a respected authority); the works of the Andalusī mystic Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 637/1240), such as *al-Futuḥāt al-makkiyya*, *al-Fuṣūṣ* and many of his *Qaṣāʾid*; the poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), because he adopted the Ṣūfī doctrines of “union” (*ittiḥād*) and “incarnation” (*ḥulūl*); works by Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 669/1271); and in general the works of atheists, the proponents of the doctrines of “union” (*ittiḥād*), “incarnation” (*ḥulūl*) and of anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*).

After his warnings against these “heretical” works, Abū ʿAlī al-Sakūnī also adds a list of authors and works from which his readers should seek guidance: al-Ashʿarī—Abū ʿAlī al-Sakūnī refers to titles he found in Ibn ʿAsākir’s list of al-Ashʿarī’s works, and so it is questionable whether he himself had actually access to them—and other authorities of the Ashʿarī school, including Abū ʿAbdallāh b. Mujāhid (d. 370/980–1), Abū l-Ḥasan al-Bāhili (d. c. 370/980), al-Bāqillānī (“author of the *Hidāya* and *al-Daqāʾiq*”), Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāʾīnī (d. 418/1027) (“author of the two *Jāmiʿs*”), Abū Bakr b. Fūrak (d. 406/1015) (“author of the two *al-Mushkils*”) and al-Juwaynī (“author of the *Irshād* and *al-Shāmil*”).⁵¹

What was the precise purpose of this list of works that common people should avoid or, on the contrary, are encouraged to consult? It is hardly likely that Abū ʿAlī al-Sakūnī really believed that his readers would actually follow his

50 Schmidtke, “Ibn Ḥazm’s Sources on Ashʿarism and Muʿtazilism”, 381; Stroumsa, “The Muʿtazila in al-Andalus”, 83.

51 For the list of works see Ghurāb, “al-Sakūnī: *Laḥn al-ʿawāmm*”, 208–16.

advice. One can safely assume that many of the “harmful” books on his list were not available in his time—such as the abovementioned third/ninth-century Mu‘tazilī works—and did therefore not represent any dogmatic challenge to late seventh/thirteenth-century Ash‘arism in North Africa. On the other hand, Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī only recommends to his readers texts of an advanced level of learning, and so one has to wonder what the actual purpose behind suggesting them to a non-expert audience was—or was he perhaps addressing students, whom he considered unworthy of the title of “scholar”?

A second *kalām* work by Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī, called *‘Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, is of significant length.⁵² Yet Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī also claims in this text that it has an educational purpose, that he wants to address a non-specialist audience and therefore wrote it in an easily accessible and attractive style.⁵³ The book is divided into 160 “disputations” (*munāẓarāt*) over controversial theological questions, and it covers the entire range of topics we typically find in a theological compendium, including the proof of God, His attributes, prophethood, and man’s acts and ethics.⁵⁴ Unlike in his father’s texts or his own *Laḥn al-‘awāmm*, the pedagogical effort is less obvious here. Rather, Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī enters into more sophisticated discussions. His proof of the existence of God is a variation of the so-called proof from creation. He offers a long and detailed argument, which uses a rather technical vocabulary. The argument starts from the premises that accidents (*a‘rāḍ*) do exist, that they are created, that bodies—which are composed of indivisible atoms (*jawāhīr*)—carry accidents, and that no atom can be free of accidents, in order to conclude that whatever cannot be devoid of, or precede, what is created must likewise be created. Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī adopts al-Juwaynī’s revision of this traditional *kalām* proof and adds the argument that whatever is created has “a first”. This addition was an attempt to neutralise the objection that bodies could still be eternal, if they carry an infinite series of created accidents.⁵⁵ Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī’s discussion further continues on a quite sophisticated level. After the proof of the createdness of the world, he introduces the term “possible existence” or “contingency” (*jāza ‘alayhi l-wujūd wa-huwa l-mu‘abbar ‘anhu bi-l-mumkin*), which he equates with the notion of createdness (*ḥudūth*). The conclusion of his proof of God’s existence is then framed in the terminology of al-Rāzī—something that I will

52 It was critically edited (including a useful introduction) by S. Ghurāb.

53 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *‘Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 49 (French introduction) and p. 14 of the edition.

54 For an outline of the work’s structure and content see pp. 48–100 of the editor’s French introduction in al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *‘Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*.

55 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *‘Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 25–30. For the traditional *kalām* proof from accidents, see Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, 134–43; for its revision by al-Juwaynī, see Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, 143–46.

discuss below in more detail: namely that the world as a contingent being requires a “preponderator” (*muraḥijih*), who must be God.⁵⁶

In a related section, Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī also relies on an Avicennian argument. In fact, he converts Ibn Sīnā's proof for the existence of God (i.e. the world is contingent and cannot exist by virtue of itself, wherefore there must be a necessary existent from which all possible existents proceed) into a proof for God's eternity: Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī offers the very same line of reasoning and then concludes that the necessarily existent cannot possibly be non-existent, so that God must consequently be eternal.⁵⁷

With regard to other issues, Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī tends to adhere to a theoretical framework that could be called “Juwaynīan”. For example, he is a proponent of the theory of *aḥwāl*, something that has implications for his reflections on God's attributes and his epistemology. In accordance with al-Juwaynī, Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī affirms that the Ash'arī doctrine of co-eternal attributes in God actually presupposes the reality of *aḥwāl*. The traditional proof for these co-eternal attributes—a proof that appears to go back to al-Ash'arī himself—argues that if we describe ourselves as “knowing” or “living” only by virtue of an entity of “knowledge” or “life” that subsists in us, the same must be true for God—otherwise, such descriptions have no univocal meaning. Now, proponents of *aḥwāl* like al-Juwaynī went a step further and claimed that if such properties as “knowing” or “living” are the “proof” or “indication” (*dalīl*) for entities of “knowledge” or “life”, then “knowing” must express a reality distinct from “knowledge” and “living” a reality distinct from “life”. It is precisely this line of reasoning that Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī presents in order to corroborate God's co-eternal attributes.⁵⁸ The Ash'arī proponents of *aḥwāl* furthermore argued that their theory implies that the *aḥwāl* can be known—this was for them the logical corollary of their claim that our knowledge of God's “being living” is the proof for His co-eternal attribute of “life”. Accordingly, Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī's taxonomy of the knowable (*al-ma'lūmāt*) includes, besides the non-existent and the existent, the *aḥwāl* of beings.⁵⁹

From Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī's pen we also have his critical engagement with al-Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf*, a project that his father left unfinished when he died. Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī wrote a long commentary, entitled *al-Tamyīz li-mā awda'ahu l-Zamakhsharī min al-i'tizāl fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-'azīz*,⁶⁰ and an

56 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 31.

57 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 33–34.

58 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 43–44.

59 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 51, 57.

60 The work was published in a not very reliable edition by al-Sayyid Yūsuf Aḥmad.

abbreviation entitled *Muqtaḍab al-Tamyīz*.⁶¹ Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī follows his father’s main purpose of revealing that al-Zamakhsharī’s widespread exegetical work fundamentally builds on Mu‘tazilī teachings. The *Tamyīz* and the *Muqtaḍab* contain an introduction (*mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn* or *muqaddima*), that is conceived as a guide to Ash‘arī *kalām*. Readers should use it as a complement to the refutation of al-Zamakhsharī’s Mu‘tazilī claims in the *Kashshāf*.⁶²

Significant sections of the introduction to the *Tamyīz* are verbatim reproductions of passages from *‘Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*. Nonetheless, it is not just a somewhat revised version of the earlier work. The introduction to the *Tamyīz* is divided into three parts. Whereas the second (the proof for God’s existence from creation) and the third part (God, His attributes, resurrection, prophecy, beatific vision, human acts, reward and punishment, revelation and the imamate) deal with theological issues in the narrowest sense, the first part addresses such topics as epistemology, ontology and logic. It is arranged as an exposition of technical terms used in the discipline of *kalām* and their definition. The first subsections (*masā’il*) on epistemology and ontology echo the conceptual framework that had its origins in early *kalām*: the taxonomy of knowledge items (*al-ma’lūmāt*) includes three types, namely “necessary” (*ḍarūriyyāt*), “rational” (*naẓariyyāt*) and “transmitted” (*khabariyyāt*) knowledge; the ontology of created beings (*al-muḥdathāt*) distinguishes between atoms (*jawāhir*), that is indivisible particles that occupy space, bodies (*ajsām*), which are composed of atoms, and accidents (*a’rāḍ*), that is, entities that subsist in atoms.⁶³ As could already be observed in *‘Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī also integrates the notion of *aḥwāl* in his ontology.⁶⁴ According to R. Wisnovsky, the above distinction between the three means of knowledge reflects the

61 S. Ghurāb writes in his French introduction to al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *‘Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 34–35, that the authenticity of this work needs to be confirmed. I was able to consult two copies of the text, MSS El Escorial, nos 1357 and 1547. The *Muqtaḍab* can be safely attributed to Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī, as the text includes a citation of his lost *al-Manhaj al-mashriq fī l-‘itirād ‘alā akthar ahl al-manṭiq*.

62 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *al-Tamyīz*, 115.

63 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *al-Tamyīz*, 115–17.

64 There are several sections that are relevant to al-Sakūnī’s appropriation of the theory of *aḥwāl*: al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *al-Tamyīz*, 116 (“the *aḥwāl* are that by virtue of which we distinguish between objects of knowledge, and they are said to be the attributes of the existents themselves”); p. 47 (“the *ḥāl* is an attribute of something existent, which is not described by either non-existence or existence, and which has reality”—this is an almost verbatim reproduction of al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 80); p. 67 (again quoting al-Juwaynī almost verbatim [al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 30], al-Sakūnī distinguishes among God’s attributes those which affirm the reality of Himself and are “uncaused” [*ghayr mu‘allala*] and those which are grounded in a distinct entity and are “caused” [*mu‘allala*]; here the notion of *ta’līl* presupposes the appropriation of the theory of *aḥwāl*); p. 76 (speaking about God’s

pre-Avicennian epistemology of Sunnī *kalām*, that was eclipsed in what he calls the “Avicennan turn” by three modes of knowledge, namely necessary (*wājib*), impossible (*muṣṭahīl*), and possible (*jā'iz*).⁶⁵ However, this picture needs further qualification. To be sure, the earliest known sources in *kalām* to distinguish the three epistemological modalities in a systematic fashion were written after Avicenna, namely by al-Juwaynī.⁶⁶ Yet his reflections could build on earlier discussions in *kalām*, as found, for example, in inquiries into the question as to what is affirmed necessarily, possibly and impossibly with regard to God.⁶⁷ In addition, we find in al-Bāqillānī's epistemological section of the *Tamhīd* some reflections about the possibility (*ṣiḥḥa*) and impossibility (*istiḥāla*) of states of affairs and how they relate to each other—albeit without developing the three modes of knowledge systematically.⁶⁸ In the case of the *Tamyīz*, Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī uses the epistemological distinction of three means of knowledge alongside the three modalities of rational justifications.⁶⁹

co-eternal attributes [*ṣifāt*], he describes them as “that which necessitate predications [about Him]” [*al-ṣifāt al-mūjiba li-ahkāmihā*]).

65 Wisnovsky, “One Aspect of the Avicennan Turn”, 66–67.

66 Wisnovsky, “One Aspect of the Avicennan Turn”, 92–93; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 171–72, also briefly discusses al-Juwaynī's understanding of the three modalities and concludes that it is different from Avicenna's: whereas the former understands possibility as synchronic alternatives to the actual existent, Avicenna conceives of possibility as a mode of being that he opposes to necessary existence. Cf., however A. Shihadeh's discussion (Shihadeh, “The Argument from Ignorance”, 195–98), which shows that possible has for al-Juwaynī a double meaning, one of which is “contingency” (*tajwīz imkān*), that is, not necessary (*wājib*).

67 The Mu'tazilī *qāḍī* 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1025) discusses for example in his short treatise *Kitāb al-uṣūl al-khamsa* what is necessary, impossible and possible for God: in the introductory part on the meaning of *tawḥīd* (Gimaret, “Les *Uṣūl al-ḥamsa*”, 80–81) he makes several affirmations in the form “God is eternally X and Y is not possible for Him” (... *fī-mā lam yazāl wa-fī-mā lā yazāl wa-lā yajūzu 'alayhi* ...); further on, he has a more detailed discussion (Gimaret, “Les *Uṣūl al-ḥamsa*”, 82–84) on what is necessary (*yajibu an yuqāl huwa .../yajību an yakūna .../wajaba an yakūna* ...), impossible (*fa-yajibu an lā .../lā yajūzu 'alayhi .../lā yajūzu an* ...) and possible (namely acts: *qad ṣaḥḥa min Allāh 'azza wa-jalla l-fī'* for God. Similarly, al-Bāqillānī discusses what is impossible (*lā/laysa yajūzu .../muḥāl/lam yajuz* ...), necessary (*wajaba an yakūna* ...) (al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 24–33) and possible (e.g. the sending of prophets: *jawāz irsāl Allāh al-rusul*) (al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 129–31) for God.

68 See the discussion in al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 11–12, §§ 16 & 18, where he describes two types of inferences: (1) if X is possible, Y is impossible; and (2) if X is possible, a similar Y is possible/if X is impossible, a similar Y is impossible.

69 See al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *al-Tamyīz*, 1:22–24 and the taxonomy of predications about God that distinguishes between what is necessary, impossible and possible with regard to Him (al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *al-Tamyīz*, 1:65; this passage has a close parallel in al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 29).

A noteworthy feature of the first section of the introduction to the *Tamyīz* is that it includes a short exposition of the ten Aristotelian categories: (1) “that which is qualified, that is, substance” (*mawṣūf wa-‘abarū ‘anhu bi-l-jawhar*), (2) quantity (*kammiyya*), (3) quality (*kayfiyya*), (4) relation (*idāfa*), (5) location (*makān*), (6) time (*zamān*), (7) possession (*istiḥqāq*), (8) posture (*wadʿ*)—in the edition the list ends here, but the original text should have included the two missing categories of (9) action and (10) passion.⁷⁰

The overall picture of Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī’s works makes it difficult to describe his teachings by any such labels as “earlier” vs. “later methodology”, “classical” vs. “philosophized” *kalām* or “pre-Avicennian” vs. “post-Avicennian”. Indeed, the legacy of “earlier” Ash‘arīs, specifically of al-Juwaynī, is clearly present in his works, not least because Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī repeatedly reproduces passages from the *Irshād*, or because he appropriates the theory of *aḥwāl* in a way that very much resembles its Juwaynian interpretation. Yet Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī’s warnings against the influence of *falsafa* (such as in *Lahṇ al-‘awāmm*) stand in clear contrast to his appropriation of such Avicennian theories as the proof from contingency in *‘Uyūn al-munāẓarāt* or the discussion of the ten Aristotelian categories in his expositions on logic, which is found in the introduction of the *Tamyīz*. In addition, I will argue in the next section that his position towards al-Rāzī was also ambivalent—it ranges between a critical posture and an eclectic approval of specific notions—something that further confirms the general picture.

In 748/1347, the Marīnids conquered Tunis. The Marīnid ruler Abū l-Ḥasan (r. 731–749/1331–1348) took great pride in patronising intellectuals at his court, and when he entered Tunis, he was accompanied by an entourage of scholars. The authors of two *kalām* works of this time appear to have benefited from the presence of these learned people, specifically as they participated in the study circles that the Marīnid court held in Tunis. The first was the famous author of the *Muqaddima*, the still young Ibn Khaldūn, whose first ever work was a commentary on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *Muḥaṣṣal*, in which he relies also on Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī’s (d. 672/1274) *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*.⁷¹ The autograph of this early

70 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *al-Tamyīz*, 1:48; in fact, al-Sakūnī announces ten categories (*‘asharat aqsām*) in an introductory sentence. As El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 143–47 writes, logicians after the sixth/twelfth century had largely ceased to treat the categories after Avicenna had argued that they do not belong to logic. It was Maghribi scholars like al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691) and his students who contributed significantly to the rise of interest in the ten Aristotelian categories in twelfth/eighteenth-century Egypt. More work needs to be done in understanding the developments in Maghribi logical thinking, specifically in connection with the discipline of *kalām*, down to the twelfth/seventeenth century.

71 See Ibn Khaldūn, *Lubāb al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 2–3; Zahrī, *al-Maṣādir al-Maghribiyya lil-‘aqida al-Ash‘ariyya*, 1:255–56.

work, entitled *Lubāb al-Muḥaṣṣal fī uṣūl al-dīn*, has survived, and it is dated 752/1351.⁷² It has to be said that Ibn Khaldūn never again produced any work in *kalām*. Yet his *Muqaddima* contains a relevant account of the history of *kalām*, which has already been discussed in the introduction to this chapter.

The second author whose scholarly education was significantly shaped by the intellectual circles of the Marīnid court in Tunis was Ibn 'Arafa (d. 803/1401).⁷³ He shared many teachers with Ibn Khaldūn, who was significantly younger (Ibn 'Arafa was born in 716/1316 and Ibn Khaldūn in 732/1332). Ibn 'Arafa became a highly influential figure in the Ḥafṣid state: he served as *imām* and *khaṭīb* of the Great Mosque of Tunis, and was eventually appointed Grand Muftī. For reasons that are not entirely clear, he was fiercely hostile to Ibn Khaldūn, when the latter returned to Tunis in 780/1378, and he finally forced his former fellow student to leave for Mamlūk Cairo.⁷⁴ Ibn 'Arafa wrote extensive works in various disciplines, including a *al-Mukhtaṣar al-shāmil fī uṣūl al-dīn*, or *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*, finished in 789/1387.⁷⁵ Unlike what such title might suggest, the *Mukhtaṣar* is not a short exposition, but rather a huge work.⁷⁶ Ibn 'Arafa's *kalām* work uses the structure of Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī's (d. between 699/1299–705/1306) *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*, and it is an important literary document of Maghribī scholars' engagement with the intellectual tradition that synthesised Ash'arism and Avicennian philosophy. Ibn Khaldūn's and Ibn 'Arafa's engagement with this strand of Ash'arī *kalām* did not appear out of nowhere. In the following, I will shed some light on the history of the transmission and dissemination of specific works by al-Rāzī, who fully developed this synthesis of *kalām* and Avicennian *falsafa*.

3 The Transmission of al-Rāzī's Works to Ifrīqiya

An account of the transmission of al-Rāzī's works to the Maghrib is found in Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima*. He reports that al-Rāzī's books were first introduced by scholars from Ifrīqiya and then further spread to the west of North Africa:

72 See p. *tā'* of the introduction to Ibn Khaldūn, *Lubāb al-Muḥaṣṣal*. For Ibn Khaldūn's education see now the recent biography by Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, 26–27.

73 Maḥfūz, *Tarājīm*, 3:363–71, no. 358; Ghrab, *Ibn 'Arafa et le mālikisme*; Ghurāb, *Ibn 'Arafa wa-l-manza' al-'aqlī*.

74 Ghrab, "Réflexions à propos de la querelle" offers an account of the quarrel.

75 Ghrab, *Ibn 'Arafa et le mālikisme*, 1:415.

76 N. Ḥammādī's 2014 edition of the work has more than 1000 pages.

After the destruction of the dynasty in Marrakech [i.e. the Almohads], in the middle of the seventh [/thirteenth] century, Judge Abû l-Qâsim b. Zaytûn traveled from Ifrîqiyah to the East. He entered into contact with the pupils of the imam Ibn al-Khaṭīb [al-Rāzī]. He studied with them and [received their] instruction.⁷⁷ He became skilled in intellectual and traditional matters. Then, he returned to Tunis with a great deal of knowledge and a good (method of) instruction. He was followed back from the East by Abû 'Abdallâh b. Shu'ayb ad-Dukkâlî, who had traveled from the Maghrib to (Ibn Zaytûn). He studied with Egyptian professors and returned to Tunis, where he remained. His (method of) instruction was effective. The inhabitants of Tunis studied with both Ibn Zaytûn and Ibn Shu'ayb. Their tradition of scientific instruction was steadily continued by their pupils, generation after generation. Eventually, it reached Judge Muḥammad b. 'Abd-as-Salâm, the commentator and pupil of Ibn al-Ḥâjib, and was transplanted from Tunis to Tlemcen through Ibn al-Imâm and his pupils. Ibn al-Imâm had studied with Ibn 'Abd-as-Salâm under the same professors in the same classes. Pupils of Ibn 'Abd-as-Salâm can be found at this time in Tunis, and pupils of Ibn al-Imâm in Tlemcen. However, they are so few that it is to be feared that the tradition may come to an end.⁷⁸

According to another Maghribi historian, Aḥmad al-Maqqarî (d. 1041/1631), Ibn Zaytûn's (d. 690/1291) journey to the east was actually triggered by another scholar from Tunis, Abû l-'Abbâs Aḥmad b. 'Īsâ al-Ghumârî (d. 682/1283). He was, according to this alternative account, the first transmitter of al-Rāzī's works—and more specifically, of his *al-Ma'âlim fî uṣûl al-dîn*.⁷⁹ Whether or not al-Ghumârî, who had studied in the Mashriq with al-Rāzī's students, can really be credited with having introduced the work(s) to North Africa cannot be confirmed with certainty. One should be careful with such narratives: in fact, Ibn Bazîza's *Is'ād*, which was completed in 644/1247,⁸⁰ shows that works by al-Rāzī were available in Tunis as early as during the first half of the seventh/thirteenth century. Ibn Bazîza was the teacher of Ibn Zaytûn,⁸¹ but he

77 Literally: *laqina ta'limahum*; Rosenthal translates "learned their (method of) instruction". According to a more detailed account in Maḥfûz, *Tarâjim*, 2:432–33, Ibn Zaytûn encountered Shams al-Dîn al-Khusrawshâhî in 648/1250 during the first of his two journeys to the Mashriq. Maḥfûz adopts Ibn Khaldûn's claim that Ibn Zaytûn was the first to introduce al-Rāzī's works and to teach the latter's methodology in Tunis.

78 Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah*, 2:427–28.

79 See Ghrab, *Ibn 'Arafa et le mālîkisme*, 1 286, quoting al-Maqqarî, *al-Azhâr*, 5:23–24.

80 See Maḥfûz, *Tarâjim*, 1 127 and the introduction to Ibn Bazîza, *al-Is'ād*, 19.

81 See Ibn Bazîza, *al-Is'ād*, 18.

is not even mentioned in either of the two narratives of the transmission of al-Rāzī's works.⁸²

Ibn Bazīza quotes al-Rāzī in the chapter on beatific vision and refers to two specific works, al-Rāzī's *al-Ma'ālīm* and *al-Arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn*.⁸³ Referring to al-Rāzī, but without identifying the text, the *Is'ād* also contains a longer quotation from *al-Muḥaṣṣal*.⁸⁴ In addition, Ibn Bazīza relies on al-Rāzī in sections where he does not cite him explicitly. This can be shown, for example, on three occasions where Ibn Bazīza appeals to the doctrines of the Mu'tazilī Rukn al-Dīn Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141), a follower of the doctrines of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 426/1044). The Khwārazmian theologian al-Malāḥimī was unknown to scholars in the Maghrib, and so it is most likely that Ibn Bazīza reproduced his accounts from secondary sources, something he does not mention explicitly, though. There are however indications that point to al-Rāzī as his source. First, al-Rāzī was an Ash'arī author who was familiar with al-Malāḥimī, and he refers to him in several of his works. Second, Ibn Bazīza refers to al-Malāḥimī in the very particular way al-Rāzī had done, namely "Maḥmūd al-Khwārazmī".⁸⁵ Finally, a comparison between the *Is'ād* and al-Rāzī's *al-Arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn* uncovers textual parallels that strongly suggest that this was actually Ibn Bazīza's source. The first and the second reference to al-Malāḥimī occur in discussions on how atoms and accidents

82 Another aspect of Ibn Khaldūn's account which has to be treated with caution is the transmission of al-Rāzī's works further westwards. In fact, al-Sharīf Abū Yahyā Zakriyyā b. Yahyā al-Idrīsī (fl. 629/1332), who probably hailed from Ceuta (Sabta), quotes in his *Abkār al-afkār al-uluwīyya* his apparently lost commentary on *al-Arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn* by al-Rāzī (Iḥnāna, *Taṭawwur*, 189–91; see also N. Ḥammādī's introduction to al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 26; Zahri, *al-Maṣādir al-Maghribiyya lil-'aqida al-Ash'ariyya*, 1:198). Little is known about al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī's biography. He studied with al-Muqtaraḥ in Egypt, and we do not know whether or not he returned to the Maghrib. We possess a copy of al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī's commentary on al-Juwaynī's *al-Irshād*, entitled *Kifāyat ṭālib 'ilm al-kalām fī sharḥ al-Irshād*. It relies on the commentary of his teacher al-Muqtaraḥ and has also some parallels with the commentary on al-Rāzī's *al-Ma'ālīm fī uṣūl al-dīn* by his fellow student in Alexandria, Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Tilimsānī (see for example al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī's and Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Tilimsānī's similar line of argumentation for conceiving of God's dissimilarity (*mukhālafa*) as a relational attribute, rather than an "essential attribute" as al-Juwaynī claims: *Kifāya*, fol. 31a and *Sharḥ Ma'ālīm*, 213; I thank Javier Albarrán and Aurora González, who helped me to obtain a copy of MS Fez, Qarawiyyīn, no. 729).

83 Ibn Bazīza, *al-Is'ād*, 369 (al-Rāzī is cited as a source on Ibn Sinā), 370 (quotation of *al-Arba'īn*), 382 (quotation of *al-Ma'ālīm*).

84 Ibn Bazīza, *al-Is'ād*, 380; the corresponding section is found in al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 189.

85 See Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte humain*, 59–60, 135, 144. Other possible sources can be excluded: al-Shahrastānī, whom Ibn Bazīza cites in his *Is'ād*, does not mention al-Malāḥimī (Ibn al-Malāḥimī al-Khwārazmī, *Mu'tamad*, vii, n. 17), nor does another important source of the *Is'ād*, al-Muqtaraḥ, *Sharḥ al-Irshād*.

cease to exist. Ibn Bazīza records in this context various divergent positions that match with those cited by al-Rāzī in *al-Arbaʿīn*: Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt (d. c. 300/913) from the “earlier” (*min qudamāʾ al-Muʿtazila*)⁸⁶ and al-Malāḥimī from the “later” Muʿtazila (*min mutaʾakhhirihim*) agree that their annihilation is caused by agents; in the case of atoms, this agent must be God—a doctrine that coincides with “the earlier of *qāḍī* Abū Bakr [al-Bāqillānī’s] two claims”.⁸⁷ The third reference to “Maḥmūd al-Khwārazmī” is found in Ibn Bazīza’s discussion on human acts. He reproduces here two aspects of al-Rāzī’s discussion in *al-Arbaʿīn*. The first is al-Rāzī’s account of the Muʿtazilīs’ debate over whether man knows through reflection that he acts autonomously or whether this is immediate knowledge (however, unlike al-Rāzī, Ibn Bazīza does not attribute the latter position to Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī). Ibn Bazīza then turns to a disagreement between al-Malāḥimī and other members of his school—al-Rāzī’s *al-Arbaʿīn* discloses that this disagreement was with Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī—with regard to the precise effect of motivations: against the claim that motivations necessitate our acts, al-Malāḥimī posits that they rather make our acts more likely to occur.⁸⁸ These textual parallels as well as the explicit quotations allow us to conclude that at least three of al-Rāzī’s works—*al-Arbaʿīn*, *al-Maʿālim fī uṣūl al-dīn* and *al-Muḥaṣṣal*—were available to Ibn Bazīza and consequently were present in North Africa sometime before 644/1247, the date of completion of the *Isʿād*.

For the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century, we have a solid foundation for expanding the list of al-Rāzī’s works that were or came to be available to scholars in Ḥafṣid Tunis. An important source are two works by the Andalusian emigrant Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Lablī. According to the autobiographical information found in his *Fihrist* and his *Fahrṣa*, it was primarily with the Alexandrian scholar Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Tilimsānī and, in Cairo and Damascus, with al-Rāzī’s student Shams al-Dīn al-Khusrawshāhī that he studied al-Rāzī’s works. Despite the relative wealth of information about the content of al-Lablī’s studies, it is difficult to reconstruct the precise timeline of his whereabouts. He himself reports that he was in Egypt in 651/1253–4. An account by the traveler and religious scholar Ibn Rushayd al-Fihri al-Sabtī (d. 721/1321) provides a *terminus ante quem* for al-Lablī’s return to Tunis: he notes that they met in a study circle in Tunis in 684/1285–6, and later again in sessions al-Lablī held

86 Ibn Bazīza, *al-Isʿād*, 170, *min fuqahāʾ al-Muʿtazila*, is a misreading.

87 Ibn Bazīza, *al-Isʿād*, 170, 298; for the parallel text see al-Rāzī, *al-Arbaʿīn*, 187.

88 Ibn Bazīza, *al-Isʿād*, 404. For the parallel text see al-Rāzī, *al-Arbaʿīn*, 228 and the discussion of these passages in Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 16, 25–26.

at the city's Zaytūna mosque in Rabī' II 686/1287.⁸⁹ In Egypt, al-Lablī studied with Ibn al-Tilimsānī parts of the theological and the legal methodological sections of al-Rāzī's *al-Ma'ālīm*, together with Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Tilimsānī's own commentary.⁹⁰ Not surprisingly, al-Lablī studied additional works by al-Rāzī with the latter's disciple al-Khusrawshāhī, including [*al-Masā'il*] *al-Khamsūn*, *al-Arba'in* (from the beginning up to the section on Muḥammad's prophethood), *al-Muḥaṣṣal* and parts of *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*. Al-Lablī reports that he agreed with al-Khusrawshāhī that the latter was al-Rāzī's best work. In the field of legal methodology, al-Lablī also read with al-Khusrawshāhī *al-Ma'ālīm fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, and most of *al-Maḥṣūl fī uṣūl al-fiqh*—al-Khusrawshāhī died before they could finish reading it.⁹¹ It is also worth mentioning here that al-Lablī studied with al-Khusrawshāhī works by the Syrian Ash'arī Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), a fierce rival of al-Khusrawshāhī and a critic of al-Rāzī—who nevertheless also engaged with Avicennian *falsafa*.⁹² Al-Lablī read the *kalām* work *Ghāyat al-marām fī 'ilm al-kalām* and *Muntahā al-sūl*, a work in legal methodology.⁹³ Apparently, al-Lablī had already read al-Āmidī's work in dialectics entitled *Ghāyat al-amal fī 'ilm al-jadal* with Ibn al-Tilimsānī in Alexandria.⁹⁴

An explicit engagement with al-Rāzī's writings is found in the works of Abū 'Alī al-Sakūnī. He had access to al-Rāzī's *al-Taḥṣīr al-kabīr*, from which he quotes a long passage about a discussion with a Christian in Khwārazm on the proof for Muḥammad's prophecy.⁹⁵ Beside al-Rāzī's huge commentary on the Qur'ān, al-Sakūnī refers relatively often to "the author of *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*" (*ṣāhib Nihāyat al-'uqūl*), a formulation that also introduces claims that al-Rāzī made in texts other than his early multi-volume *kalām* work. One such reference is found in *Uyūn al-munāẓarāt* in the discussion of the question of how different modalities of God's speech—command, prohibition, statement—can be considered as "one thing" (*shay'an wāḥidan*).⁹⁶ Here, al-Sakūnī says he follows al-Rāzī's position that these modalities (called *awṣāf al-kalām* by al-Ash'arī and his followers) can be reduced to one "description" (*wasf*), namely the communication of the law.⁹⁷

89 See the editor's introduction to *Fahrasat Abī Ja'far al-Lablī*, 17, with further references.

90 al-Lablī, *Fihrist al-Lablī*, 27.

91 al-Lablī, *Fihrist al-Lablī*, 123–24; *Fahrasat Abī Ja'far al-Lablī*, 85–86.

92 On al-Āmidī's engagement with *falsafa* see Hassan, "The Encounter of *Falsafa* and *Kalām*" and Lammer, "Eternity and Origination in the Works of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī and Athīr al-Dīn al-Abḥarī".

93 *Fahrasat Abī Ja'far al-Lablī*, 86.

94 al-Lablī, *Fihrist al-Lablī*, 27.

95 Cited in al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 283–84.

96 On this issue and its discussion in the Ash'arī school, see Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 318–21.

97 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *Uyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 41.

Further on in the same text, al-Sakūnī includes a short rebuttal of al-Rāzī's conception of such divine attributes as power, will, knowledge, life, hearing and seeing, speech and perception. Al-Sakūnī later reproduced this section in the introduction to the *Tamyīz*. The claim under discussion in the two texts was actually made by al-Rāzī in several works he wrote after the *Nihāya*, where he conceives of attributes as mere relations (*mujarrad nisab wa-idāfāt*): for example, "knowledge" would be the description of the relation between the one who knows (*al-ʿālim*) and the object of knowledge (*al-maʿlūm*).⁹⁸ Al-Sakūnī does not reveal his source, though.⁹⁹

He does so however in a short quotation of al-Rāzī's *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl* within a discussion, which is found in almost identical form in *ʿUyūn al-munāẓarāt* and in the introduction to the *Tamyīz*.¹⁰⁰ The wider context of this passage is the proof that God does not resemble anything in the created world. The section includes a specific discussion of God's dissimilarity from accidents, and this discussion is primarily based on the claim that, unlike God, accidents cannot have continuous existence. Al-Sakūnī substantiates this claim on the basis of a doctrine that had already been advocated by early Ashʿarīs, namely that beings can only have continuous existence by virtue of an entity of "continuity" (*baqāʾ*) that subsists in them. It was then concluded that if accidents had continuous existence, one had to concede that accidents can be the locus of inherence of other accidents. However, *kalām* ontology excludes this possibility. Yet this argument was undermined by al-Rāzī, and specifically by a line of argument that al-Sakūnī cites from the chapter on God's continuous existence in *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*.¹⁰¹ Al-Rāzī rejects in this section the idea that the continuous existence of atoms is caused by a distinct accident of "continuity". Rather, he posits that atoms have in themselves contingent existence, and this implies that existing atoms may cease to exist at any moment of time. Furthermore, he argues that positing an entity of "continuity" adds to the problem of explaining the temporal existence of atoms rather than resolving it: if their existence really depended on, and was consequently impossible without, a superadded

98 See Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-ʿAllāma al-Hillī*, 177–79, 191–95; Schmidtke, *Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik*, 97, n. 61 and 102 citing al-Rāzī's *al-Ishāra fī ʿilm al-kalām*, *al-Maʿālim fī uṣūl al-dīn*, *Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* and *al-Arbaʿīn*; see also Abrahamov, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on God's Knowledge of the Particulars".

99 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *ʿUyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 44; al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *al-Tamyīz*, 97. It would of course be possible that al-Sakūnī's discussion relied on a secondary source: an examination of the theory was also part of Ibn al-Tilimsānī's commentary on al-Rāzī's *al-Maʿālim*; see Kenny, "Muslim Theology as Presented By M.B. Yūsuf as-Sanūsī", 142.

100 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *ʿUyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 50; al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *al-Tamyīz*, 113.

101 al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*, 2:446ff.; al-Sakūnī cites the passage on p. 454.

accident, atoms could no longer be considered as contingent, but rather as impossible in themselves (*lazima inqilāb al-ṣiḥḥa al-dhātīyya ilā imtinā' al-dhātīyya*, or, as al-Sakūnī formulates it, *intiḡāl ... imkān al-wujūd al-dhātī ilā l-imtinā' al-dhātī*), and this, al-Rāzī concludes, would be absurd.¹⁰²

While al-Sakūnī disagrees with al-Rāzī's argument, it is noteworthy that he uses in his discussion a terminology that was central to al-Rāzī's account of why contingent beings come to exist: namely the notion of a "preponderator" (*murajjih*), that is, a factor that determines which of two states of affair that are possible to exactly the same degree eventually becomes real.¹⁰³ On the other hand, and only shortly before this passage, al-Sakūnī uses for the same idea a notion that is linked to the terminology used by al-Juwaynī, rather than that of al-Rāzī, namely that of the arbitrarily choosing "particularizer" (*mukhaṣṣiṣ mukhtār*).

A more detailed examination of al-Sakūnī's mixing of terms that he came to use in most likelihood under a Rāzian influence on the one hand, and notions that were more common in earlier Ash'arī contexts on the other, would certainly be useful: here, I will limit myself to pointing to only one additional example, to show briefly that the abovementioned case is not isolated. Al-Sakūnī opens his *Uyūn al-munāẓarāt* with a short reflection on the noble character of *kalām* (which he terms here *'ilm al-tawḥīd*). Such considerations were part of a justification of a rational theological discourse, whose legitimacy had always been contested, primarily by traditionalist opponents. A line of argumentation that can be traced back to the earliest historical stages of the Ash'arī school consisted in claiming that rational reflection (*naẓar*) is in fact man's first legal obligation.¹⁰⁴ H. Eichner argues that the discourse over the legitimacy of *kalām* experienced gradual changes under the impact of the Avicennian epistemological hierarchy of the philosophical sciences. Echoes of Ibn Sīnā's theory are found in several contradictory rankings of the religious sciences in al-Ghazālī's works. Of particular relevance here is a hierarchy in al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustasfā*, where the science of *kalām* is described as the "universal science" (*'ilm kullī*) among the remaining "particular" (*juz'ī*) religious sciences. The distinction between "universal" and "particular sciences" is made on the basis of its object of study: whereas "particular sciences" are more specific in that, for example, the

102 For further background on this doctrine see also Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī*, 214–21.

103 For al-Rāzī's use of the notion of *murajjih*, see Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte humain*, 141–45; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 20–21; for a discussion of Gimaret's analysis, see furthermore Madelung, "Late Mu'tazila and Determinism".

104 On the early Ash'arī discussions about man's obligation to engage in theological reflections see Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*".

field of exegesis examines the meaning of the Qurʾān and the field of *ḥadīth* is limited to prophetic traditions, the object of study of *kalām* is the most general, namely whatever exists. Al-Rāzī's approach in several works differed from al-Ghazālī's epistemological hierarchy and instead insists on the noble character of the discipline of *kalām* in order to show its superiority. He argues that the nobility of a science's object of study determines the nobility of the science itself (and since no object of knowledge can be more noble than God, *kalām* must be the most noble science), and he adds that the proofs of *kalām* are reliable.¹⁰⁵ If we look at al-Sakūnī's introduction to *ʿUyūn al-munāẓarāt*, we also encounter the Rāzian description of *kalām* as the most noble science. However, he substantiates his claim by arguments that H. Eichner associates with the different stages in the gradual transformation of the argument in support of the superiority of *kalām*:

The science of monotheism (*ʿilm al-tawḥīd*) is the most noble science¹⁰⁶ for several reasons: (1) its object of knowledge is the most noble object of knowledge, (2) God (may He be exalted) refers to it as the greatest reward, (3) its object [is established] by clear proofs and every other revealed and rational science depends on it, because it is a universal science and the others are particular [sciences], and (4) it is [man's] first obligation.¹⁰⁷

The engagement with al-Rāzī's writings and with his approach to the discipline of *kalām* visibly increased over the course of the eighth/fourteenth century. Several scholars who appear to have contributed significantly to this process do not seem to have left any work in the field—or at least no work in *kalām* from their pens has been found. Our main sources of information about their scholarly activity are therefore secondary reports, including those by their students Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn ʿArafa. Three scholars deserve specific attention:

1. Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Salāma al-Anṣārī (d. 746/1345);
2. Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Hawwārī (d. 749/1348);
3. Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad al-Ābilī (d. 757/1356).

Only the first two actually hailed from Ifrīqiya. Muḥammad b. Salāma al-Anṣārī is said to have written a *Sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, in which he reportedly criticised al-Ghazālī severely.¹⁰⁸ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Hawwārī appears

105 Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy", 206–23 for al-Ghazālī and 276–80 for al-Rāzī.

106 Read *ashraf al-ʿulūm* instead of *ashraf al-maʿlūm*.

107 al-Sakūnī al-Ishbīlī, *ʿUyūn al-munāẓarāt*, 13–14.

108 For a biographical sketch, see Maḥfūz, *Tarājim*, 3:64, no. 248; Ghrab, *Ibn ʿArafa et le mālīkisme*, 1:233–34.

to have been a controversial personality. He was chief judge and preacher of the Great Mosque in Tunis, and he also taught for some time at the city's 'Unqiyya *madrasa*, until he was replaced by Muḥammad b. Salāma on the order of the Ḥafṣid princess, who had founded the school. Ibn Khaldūn reports that when al-Sharīf al-Tilimsānī (d. 771/1370), a well-versed logician at the Marīnid court,¹⁰⁹ visited Tunis in the 740s/1340s, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Salām had private sessions with him to read chapters from Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*. His works possibly include a *fatwā* collection (whose authenticity needs however to be confirmed) and a commentary on Ibn Ḥājib's (d. 646/1248) *Jāmi' al-ummahāt*, a work in Mālikī law. N. Ḥammādī mentions that Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Salām wrote a summary on al-Rāzī's *al-Ma'ālīm fī uṣūl al-dīn*—information that I could not verify.¹¹⁰ He died of the plague in 749/1348.¹¹¹

The last of the abovementioned scholars was from Tlemcen and only spent a certain period of his career in Tunis. Al-Ābilī was a scholar at the Marīnid court and renowned as a master of the “rational sciences” (*al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyya*), specifically mathematics (in fact, he had studied with the famous mathematician Ibn al-Bannā' al-Marrākushī [d. 721/1321]). In addition, al-Ābilī taught works in logic, including Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī's (d. 646/1248) *al-Jumal*, and—as I will describe in more detail below—al-Rāzī's works in *kalām*. He came to Tunis when the Marīnids took over the city in 748/1347, as he was part of the scholarly entourage of the court. He remained there even after the departure of the Marīnid ruler, but later joined the court again in Fez.¹¹²

According to the chains of transmission provided by the *Barnāmiy* of Ibn 'Arafa's student al-Majjārī (d. 862/1458), Muḥammad b. Salāma taught al-Juwaynī's *Irshād* and al-Rāzī's *al-Ma'ālīm fī uṣūl al-dīn*; Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Salām al-Hawwārī taught al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal*; and al-Ābilī also taught al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*.¹¹³ In addition, Ibn Khaldūn reports in the introduction to his *Lubāb al-Muḥaṣṣal* that he studied with al-Ābilī—whom he considered his

109 For al-Sharīf al-Tilimsānī, see El-Rouayheb, *Relational Syllogisms*, 72; El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 148; El-Rouayheb, *The Development of Arabic Logic*, 125–26.

110 Ḥammādī mentions the summary in his introduction to al-Rāzī, *Ma'ālīm uṣūl al-dīn*, 18, without providing any source for this claim; see also Zahrī, *al-Maṣādir al-Maghribiyya lil-ʿaqida al-Ash'ariyya*, 1:241–42.

111 For a biographical sketch, see Maḥfūz, *Tarājim*, 3:325–28, no. 344; Ghrab, *Ibn 'Arafa et le mālīkisme*, 1:234–41.

112 For al-Ābilī, see Nassar, “Le maître d'Ibn Khaldūn”; Ghrab, *Ibn 'Arafa et le mālīkisme*, 1:246–48.

113 See Maḥfūz, *Tarājim*, 3:364–65; Ghrab, *Ibn 'Arafa et le mālīkisme*, 1:284–86; Ghrab writes that Muḥammad b. Salāma also taught al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal*, but this is not confirmed by the source (see al-Majjārī, *Barnāmiy*, 141–45).

principal teacher¹¹⁴—al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal*. Ibn Khaldūn's commentary (or rather, his summary) of the *Muḥaṣṣal*, was, as he says, an immediate result of these study sessions. As his second main source he mentions Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's commentary *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*.¹¹⁵ Ibn Khaldūn's first book remained also his last and only work in *kalām*. As echoed in the *Muqaddima* in his statement on the irrelevance of the discipline in his time, his scholarly interest turned to other fields and concerns. This, and the fact that he wrote the *Lubāb* in his youth, is important to bear in mind in order not to overestimate the work's importance. It is, however, worth mentioning in our context, in order to shed light on the increasing dissemination of al-Rāzī's teachings and works, and also of the works of scholars from the Islamic east, like Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, who engaged with al-Rāzī's teachings.

Much more relevant for the impact of al-Rāzī and of Ash'arī theologians who engaged in a similar way with Avicennian philosophy is Ibn 'Arafa. Unlike his fellow student Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn 'Arafa became a master of law and legal methodology as well as of the field of *kalām*. This is shown by his voluminous compendium *al-Mukhtaṣar al-shāmil fī uṣūl al-dīn* (or *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*). As mentioned above, Ibn 'Arafa structured his *Mukhtaṣar* according to the model of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*—a work that, as he says in the introduction, he valued for its clarity.¹¹⁶

H. Eichner has highlighted the role of al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār* for the systematic appropriation of the Avicennian philosophical framework by Ash'arī *kalām* and the eventual consolidation of this approach within the school. Al-Bayḍāwī's much-commented work was the first Ash'arī theological compendium to adopt the structure of al-Rāzī's *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*. The *Mulakhkhaṣ* is a work that al-Rāzī counts among his *falsafī* texts in the classification of his own body of works.¹¹⁷ According to H. Eichner, the innovativeness of *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* is reflected in the very structure of the work, which she describes as a “dissolution of the philosophical disciplines as constituted by the Aristotelian books and reinterpreted by Avicenna”.¹¹⁸

To the best of my knowledge, we have no source that shows that al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār* was available in Ifrīqiya before the time of Ibn 'Arafa. His

114 Nassar, “Le maître d'Ibn Khaldūn”, 113.

115 Ibn Khaldūn, *Lubāb al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 2–3.

116 Ibn 'Arafa, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*, 74.

117 For al-Rāzī's distinction between *kalāmī* and *falsafī* works, see Shihadeh, “From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī”, 170; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 7.

118 Eichner, “Handbooks in the Tradition of Later Eastern Ash'arism”, 502–12; and in a more elaborate fashion, Eichner, “Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition”, 31–61, 373–75.

contemporary Ibn Khaldūn mentions the work in his *Muqaddima*, too.¹¹⁹ Yet Ibn 'Arafa's *Mukhtaṣar* is the first theological compendium from the Maghrib to adopt the structure of al-Bayḍāwī's work. The pattern consists of an Introduction (*al-mabādi'*) and three parts or books.¹²⁰ The introduction and Book 1 on "the possible" (*al-kitāb al-awwal fī l-mumkināt*) represent more than 60% of Ibn 'Arafa's entire *Mukhtaṣar*.¹²¹ It is only with the second part that divine matters (*al-ilāhiyyāt*) are addressed,¹²² and Book 3, entitled "Prophethood" (*al-nubuwwāt*), deals with prophetic matters, resurrection and the question of the imamate.¹²³ Ibn 'Arafa adds to the structure employed by al-Bayḍāwī in *Ṭawālī' al-anwār* an Appendix that treats such topics as repentance (*tawba*), the name and the thing named (*al-ism wa-l-musammā*), the act of predicating and the predication (*al-waṣf wa-l-ṣifa*), the appointed time (*al-ajal*), the price (*al-sī'r*), and commanding right and forbidding wrong (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*).¹²⁴

Considering the length of the Introduction and Book 1 of Ibn 'Arafa's *al-Mukhtaṣar al-shāmil*, it is worth highlighting that more than the half of his book is not concerned with theological issues in a narrow sense. If one can reasonably argue that the treatment of the main subjects of the Introduction—namely certain knowledge (*al-ilm*), proofs (*al-dalīl*) and reasoning (*al-naẓar*)—was part of the epistemological reflections we also typically find in many early Ash'arī theological compendia,¹²⁵ the next section, that is Book 1 of *al-Mukhtaṣar al-shāmil*, follows the approach of al-Rāzī's *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* and adopted by al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*, which can be described as an exposition of *kalām* within the analytical framework of Avicennian philosophy. Following the template of al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*, Ibn 'Arafa first discusses "universal matters" (*al-umūr al-kullīyya*), subdivided into subsections on (i) the classification of knowable objects (*tafṣīl al-ma'lūmāt*); (ii) existence and non-existence (*al-wujūd wa-l-'adam*); (iii) quiddity (*al-māhīyya*); (iv) necessity, possibility, impossibility, eternity and existence *ex nihilo* (*al-wujūb wa-l-imkān wa-l-imtinā' wa-l-qidam wa-l-ḥudūth*); (v) singularity (*al-waḥda*); and (vi) cause and effect (*al-'illa wa-l-ma'lūl*). The second and the third sections of Book 1 on "the possible" echo the same approach: accidents (*a'rāḍ*) are discussed within the framework derived from

119 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 3:53.

120 The book's structure is also reproduced in Ghrab, *Ibn 'Arafa et le mālikisme*, 1:415–17.

121 Ibn 'Arafa, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*, 75–694.

122 Ibn 'Arafa, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*, 695–926.

123 Ibn 'Arafa, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*, 927–1065.

124 Ibn 'Arafa, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*, 1065–83.

125 Frank, "The Science of *Kalām*", 12.

the Aristotelian accidental categories (*al-maqūlāt*)—with subsections on (i) general questions (*al-masā'il al-kullīyya*); (ii) quantity (*al-kamm*); (iii) quality (*al-kayf*); and (iv) accidents of relation (*al-a'rāḍ al-nisbiyya*)—while substance and body (*al-jawhar wa-l-jism*) are examined in the framework of the Aristotelian distinction between material (*al-jism*) and non-material substances (*al-mufāraqāt*), including the soul and the intellect.

Whereas the structure of Ibn 'Arafa's *al-Mukhtaṣar al-shāmil* reproduces that of al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*, it would not be accurate to describe the former as a commentary upon the latter. Rather, Ibn 'Arafa's purpose was to use *Ṭawālī' al-anwār* as a structural pattern “to collect in it a comprehensive synopsis of the principles of the methods of the earlier ones and the later ones among the practitioners of this discipline [i.e. *kalām*]”¹²⁶—a formulation that evokes Ibn Khaldūn's historical periodisation of *kalām*. Ibn 'Arafa's explicitly comparative approach is reflected in his style of writing: large passages are juxtapositions of the positions of mainly Ash'arī, but also some Mu'tazilī, theologians as well as some *falāsifa*. Significant sections of Ibn 'Arafa's texts actually look like compilations or patchworks of quotations. Ibn 'Arafa either quotes literally or provides his own paraphrases—and he generally tends to identify his sources with high precision. The earliest Ash'arī theologians he treats with regularity are al-Bāqillānī, Ibn Fūrak and Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'īnī. Yet it does not seem that Ibn 'Arafa used any of their writings directly, and so his earliest Ash'arī primary sources appear to be al-Juwaynī's *al-Shāmil* and *al-Irshād*.¹²⁷ Ibn 'Arafa also quotes Maghribi commentaries upon the *Irshād*, namely *al-Mihād fī sharḥ al-Irshād* by Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Māzarī (d. 530/1135),¹²⁸ as well as Ibn Bazīza's abovementioned *Is'ād*, and, in addition, the commentary by the Alexandrian Taqī l-Dīn al-Muqṭaraḥ.¹²⁹ Alongside al-Muqṭaraḥ's commentary on the *Irshād*, Ibn 'Arafa also quotes his *al-Asrār al-aqlīyya fī l-kalimāt al-nabawīyya*.¹³⁰

The list of persons and works that Ibn 'Arafa should have identified with the “method of the later ones” is quite important. In fact, al-Bayḍāwī's *Tawālī' al-anwār* in only one of the frequently cited works, which additionally include:

126 Ibn 'Arafa, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*, 74: *ra'aytu an ajma'a fīhi mukhtaṣaran shāmilan uṣūl ṭarīqatay al-aqdamīn wa-l-muta'akkkhirīn min ahl hādha l-sha'n*.

127 The text includes also one quotation of Abū Ja'far al-Simnānī (d. 444/1051)—apparently not from al-Simnānī's *al-Bayān 'an uṣūl al-īmān*—but it is not clear whether or not Ibn 'Arafa had direct access to his work(s) (see Ibn 'Arafa, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*, 422).

128 On this commentary, see Idris, “À propos d'un extrait du *Kitāb al-Mihād*”; the work still remains unedited.

129 For an edition of this work, see above fn. 44.

130 The text was edited in 2009 by N. Ḥammādī.

- al-Rāzī's *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, *al-Arbaʿīn*, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, *al-Maʿālim fī uṣūl al-dīn*, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, *Lubāb al-Ishārāt* and *Sharḥ al-Qānūn*;
- al-Āmidī's *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn*, *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*, *Ghāyat al-marām* and *Daqāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq fī l-ḥikma*;
- Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Tilimsānī's commentary on al-Rāzī's *al-Maʿālim fī uṣūl al-dīn*;¹³¹
- Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī's (d. 663/1264) *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*;
- Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's ("al-Khwāja") *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal* and *Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*;
- Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī's (d. 675/1277) *al-Mufaṣṣal fī sharḥ al-Muḥaṣṣal*;
- Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī's (d. 693/1294) *Lubāb al-Arbaʿīn*, an abridgement of al-Rāzī's *al-Arbaʿīn*;
- Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 749/1348) *Tasdīd al-qawāʾid*, a commentary on al-Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*;
- an additional representative of the "method of the later ones" might have been Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Masīlī (d. c. 580/1184), a scholar from Bijāya, nicknamed "the small Ghazālī" (*Abū Ḥāmid al-ṣaghūr*); Ibn ʿArafa quotes his *al-Tadhkira fī uṣūl al-dīn*, which appears to be lost.

Among the texts cited in Ibn ʿArafa's *al-Mukhtaṣar al-shāmīl*, it is also worth mentioning an introductory manual of syllogistic logic, Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī's *al-Jumal*. As mentioned above, Ibn Khaldūn's and Ibn ʿArafa's teacher al-Ābilī taught this work, and al-Majjārī's *Barnāmij* confirms that Ibn ʿArafa actually read it with al-Ābilī.¹³² Furthermore, Ibn ʿArafa quotes from al-Khūnajī's more advanced *Kashf al-asrār*—without mentioning the title, though¹³³—and, also from the field of logic, Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī's (d. 682/1283) *Maṭālīʿ al-anwār*. This is relevant in the light of later developments, more specifically the emergence of a type of scholars that El-Rouayheb labelled "Theologian-Logicians". In the tenth/seventeenth century, scholars from the Maghrib achieved high renown in Cairo for their mastery of the two disciplines, and their teaching activities stimulated the intellectual landscape in Egypt and also to some extent in the Ḥijāz. Ibn ʿArafa's *Mukhtaṣar fī l-manṭiq* was in fact one of the texts Maghribi "Theologian-Logicians" taught to advanced students in logic.¹³⁴ It would seem that al-Ābilī and Ibn ʿArafa were two representatives of this

131 For an edition of this work see above fn. 29.

132 Ghrab, *Ibn ʿArafa et le mālikisme*, 1:290, quoting al-Majjārī, *Barnāmij*, 145; see also Nassar, "Le maître d'Ibn Khaldūn", 112.

133 See Ibn ʿArafa, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*, 83, 85–86, which quotes from al-Khūnajī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 67–68.

134 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 131–72. For Ibn ʿArafa's role as a logician see now also El-Rouayheb, *The Development of Arabic Logic*, 126–27.

specific type of scholarship that appears to rise in the Maghrib in the eighth/fourteenth century, and Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī’s introduction to the *Tamyīz* even points to a somewhat earlier rise of interest in Aristotelian logic.

4 Concluding Remarks

Ash‘arī theologians from the Maghrib and their works have played only a subordinate role in the scholarly examination of the school’s “later” developments. Even such a work as Ibn ‘Arafā’s *al-Mukhtaṣar al-shāmīl*, which follows the Rāzian approach of synthesising Ash‘arī *kalām* and Avicennian philosophy—and which would consequently be a complementary case to the developments encountered in the east—has passed almost unnoticed. This paper has attempted to shed some light on the dissemination of this “philosophizing” strand of Ash‘arism to Ifrīqiya, where historical sources locate the beginnings of al-Rāzī’s reception in the Maghrib. The earliest evidence for the presence of al-Rāzī’s works that I was able to trace in Ifrīqiyān sources dates from before the middle of the seventh/thirteenth century. This matches roughly with the timeframe provided by historical narratives about the transmission of al-Rāzī’s works. Yet one should treat some aspects of these accounts carefully, specifically their inclination to associate the introduction of al-Rāzī’s works with one specific personality.

Ibn ‘Arafā does not appear to be an exception in appropriating this “Avicennized” form of Ash‘arī *kalām* in the Maghrib: for example, one of his students, named ‘Umar b. Muḥammad al-Qalshānī (d. 847/1444), wrote a commentary on al-Bayḍāwī’s *Ṭawālī‘ al-anwār* in several volumes, which however appears to be lost.¹³⁵ Yet the more general picture of how the Ifrīqiyān theologians discussed in this paper received the Rāzian and post-Rāzian approach to Ash‘arī *kalām* is multifaceted. As I tried to show by such examples as Abū ‘Alī al-Sakūnī, the scholars’ positions towards al-Rāzī could be quite ambivalent. Examples like him indicate that attempts were made to adopt specific Rāzian ideas eclectically and to integrate them in a general framework that drew significantly on pre-Rāzian Ash‘arī traditions—specifically al-Juwaynī—and that this was combined with discussions on aspects of Aristotelian logic. The rise of interest in logic among Ifrīqiyān scholars of theology leads us back to the case of Ibn ‘Arafā, who appears to have followed the generation of his

¹³⁵ For al-Qalshānī and his commentary, see Maḥfūz, *Tarājīm*, 4:104–6, no. 451. The work appears to have remained unfinished, as it only covers the sections up to *Ilāhiyyāt*.

teachers in the valorization of this discipline. "Later" Ash'arism in Ifrīqiya offers a variegated picture, in which adherence to this school of *kalām* has manifold manifestations.

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The Legacy of ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī

His Works and His Students

Reza Pourjavady

1 Introduction: Ash‘arī Theology from al-Bayḍāwī to al-Ījī

The death of Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī, which occurred in Tabriz sometime between 699/1299–1300 and 705/1305–6,¹ was a great loss for the proponents of Ash‘arī theology in the Ilkhanate. For decades after al-Bayḍāwī’s death, Sunnī, and occasionally even Shī‘ī,² scholars continued to teach and comment on his theological works. Al-Bayḍāwī is most widely known nowadays for his Qur’ān commentary, the *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl*. At the time, however, his theological treatise, *Ṭawālī‘ al-anwār* was more popular. This treatise became the textbook of Ash‘arī theology in Tabriz. By the end of the Ilkhanate in 736/1335, it was the subject of at least eight commentaries by the following scholars:

- 1 In his article, “Das Todesdatum des Baiḍāwī”, Josef van Ess indicates that the date of al-Bayḍāwī’s death is not known. He argues that his death might have occurred at any time between 685/1286 and 716/1316. Etan Kohlberg moves the *terminus post quem* for his death forward to 699/1299–1300. Since al-Bayḍāwī comments on a legal point that ‘Allāma al-Ḥillī made in his *Qawā‘id al-aḥkām*, his death must have occurred sometime after 699/1299–1300, the date of composition of this work by al-Ḥillī. See Etan Kohlberg, “Bayḍāwī, Nāṣir-al-Dīn”, *Enlr*, 4:15–17. On the other hand, there is a piece of evidence which suggests that his death occurred before mid-Jumādā 11 705 (ca. 1 January 1306). In a private library in Lahore, there is a copy of al-Bayḍāwī’s commentary on *Maṣābiḥ al-sunna*, copy completed in mid-Jumādā 11 705. The copyist who knew the author personally prays for his soul (*qaddasa Allāh rūḥahu*) which indicates that he was dead by that date. See Nawshāhī, “Nuskahāh-yi Khaṭṭī-i chand majmū‘a-yi khaṭṭī dar Lāhūr (Pākistān),” 511. In his recent article on “al-Bayḍāwī” in *EI*³, Walid Saleh suggests 716/1316 as the provisional date of al-Bayḍāwī’s death following the assertion of al-Shihāb al-Khafājī (d. 1069/1659). This date cannot be correct. In addition to the evidence mentioned above, as Etan Kohlberg indicated in his aforementioned article, it has been narrated that Qutb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311) was buried next to the grave of al-Bayḍāwī in the Charandāb cemetery of Tabriz, which confirms that al-Bayḍāwī was dead by 710/1311.
- 2 One of the Shī‘ī scholars who showed interest in al-Bayḍāwī’s theological works was Naṣir al-Dīn al-Kāshī (d. 755/1354). As evident from one of his licences (*ijāzāt*), al-Kāshī used to teach al-Bayḍāwī’s *Miṣbāḥ al-arwāḥ* to his students. Moreover, he wrote a commentary on al-Bayḍāwī’s *al-Ṭawālī‘ al-anwār*. See ‘Atāyī Nazārī, “Nigārishī bar nigārishhā-yi kalāmī (8): Naṣir al-Dīn al-Kāshānī wa nawishtaḥā-yi kalāmī-i ū”, 124–26.

1. Burhān al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 684/1286);³
2. Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī (d. 732/1332); completed in Tabriz in 703/1303–4;⁴
3. Aḥmad al-Ījī (fl. 704/1304); completed in Tabriz in or before 704/1304;⁵
4. Ṣāḥib al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Fārūqī (fl. 707/1307–8); completed in 707/1307–8;⁶
5. Burhān al-Dīn al-‘Ibrī (d. 743/1343); completed in 708/1308–9;⁷
6. Zayn al-Dīn al-Mawṣilī (fl. 723/1323); completed in 723/1323;⁸
7. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Āmulī (d. 753/1352); his commentary, titled *Tanqīḥ al-afkār fī sharḥ Ṭawālī’ al-anwār*, was completed in 726/1325–26.⁹
8. Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 749/1348); his commentary, titled *Maṭālī’ al-anzār fī sharḥ Ṭawālī’ al-anwār*, was completed in 735/1334–35.¹⁰

Al-Bayḍāwī also wrote some other theological works, such as *Miṣbāḥ al-arwāḥ*. His theological approach is also evinced in his works on legal theories (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), such as his *Minhāj al-uṣūl*.

In the final years of al-Bayḍāwī’s life, Twelver Shī‘ī theology had acquired a greater degree of recognition in the Ilkhanate mainly due to the works of Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 727/1325). In 696/1296, al-Ḥillī wrote his commentary on Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī’s (d. 672/1274) *Tajrīd al-‘itiqād* (titled *Kashf al-murād*), in 699/1299 he completed his *Nahj al-mustarshidīn* and in 703/1304 he completed his commentary on al-Ṭūsī, *Qawā‘id al-‘aqa‘id* (titled *Kashf al-fawā‘id*). Although al-Bayḍāwī is known to have commented on a legal point that al-Ḥillī

3 Al-Nasafī’s commentary on *Ṭawālī’* is not known to be extant. Al-Nasafī, however, refers to it in his *Risāla fī l-dawr wa-l-tasalsul*. See Burhān al-Dīn al-Nasafī, *Risāla fī l-dawr wa-l-tasalsul*, MS Majlis 10115/30, p. 74. See also al-Nasafī, *Commentary upon the Foundation of Intellectual Perspicacity Concerning Logic*, 9.

4 MS Fazil Ahmad Pasha 831.

5 MS Chester Beatty Library 5198, copied by Zakariyyā’ b. ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Khalkhālī. See Al Ghouz, Abdelkader, “Recasting al-Bayḍāwī’s Eschatological Concept of Bodily Resurrection”, 48.

6 See Ḥājī Khalifa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, 2:116. A manuscript of this work is extant in MS University of Tehran 5251.

7 MS University of Tehran, Ilāhiyyāt 290 J. The commentary covers the text of the *Ṭawālī’* from the beginning up to the chapter on *Imāma*. See Ḥujjatī, *Fihrist-i Nuskahā-yi Khaṭṭī-i*, 579. For some other manuscripts of this work, see Eichner, *Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy*, 289–90.

8 MS Majlis 1695 and MS Hasan Hüsnü Paşa 1139-M (held at the Süleymaniye Library). For further information about this work, see Eichner, *Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy*, 290.

9 The commentary, completed in 726/1325–26, is titled *Tanqīḥ al-afkār fī sharḥ Ṭawālī’ al-anwār*. A copy of it is preserved in MS Ragip Pasha 782, held at the Süleymaniye Library.

10 This commentary became the most widely known commentary on the *Ṭawālī’*. It is dedicated to al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Qalāwūn. A lithograph edition of it was published in Istanbul (Dār Sa‘adat, Şirket-i İlmiye) in 1305/1887. It has also been translated into English. See al-Bayḍāwī and al-Iṣfahānī, *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*.

had made in his *Qawā'id al-aḥkām*, he seems to have remained silent about theological developments in Twelver Shī'ism. A few years after the death of al-Bayḍāwī, in late 708/1308 or early 709/1309, the Ilkhan Öljaitü, also known by his Muslim name, Muḥammad Khudā banda (r. 703/1304–716/1316), converted to Twelver Shī'ism, and this conversion had some significant consequences for his religious policies. Upon the Ilkhan's request there follows a mass conversion to Shī'ism among his amirs. Moreover, Friday sermons, state documents and coins were changed to demonstrate Shī'ī beliefs.¹¹ This remained the situation until shortly before the Ilkhan's death in 716/1316. It was during this period that al-Ḥillī and some other Shī'ī scholars composed several polemical works against Sunnī Islam. Among these polemical works were al-Ḥillī's *Nahj al-ḥaqq wa-kashf al-ṣidq*, *Minhāj al-karāma fī l-imāma*, *Alfayn fī imāmat Amīr al-mu'minīn* and *Kashf al-yaqīn fī faḍā'il Amīr al-mu'minīn*.¹² All these works are dedicated to Öljaitü, which indicates that his court was actively propagating Shī'ī thought in this period. The Ilkhan was not merely interested in the expression of a general Shī'ī sentiment. He seems to have been engaged with Shī'ī theological discussions in some depth. For instance, as indicated by al-Ḥillī, Öljaitü was interested in the Shī'ī position on human free will and the Shī'ī counterarguments against the Ash'arī stance. It was for this reason that al-Ḥillī wrote his *Istiqṣā' al-naẓar fī l-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar*.¹³ On the other hand, it appears that contemporaneous Ash'arī theologians did not openly defend their theological positions during this time. As we saw earlier, none of the known commentaries on *Ṭawālī' al-anwār* date to this period. In fact, during this Shī'ī phase of Öljaitü's reign no Ash'arī theological work is known to have been composed in the Ilkhanid Empire.

Another development at the time was Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī's (d. 722/1322) criticisms of various Ash'arī positions in his theological works, particularly *al-Ṣaḥā'if*.¹⁴ Recent studies make it evident that al-Samarqandī was also a resident of Tabriz, at least for a short period.¹⁵ Regardless of the

11 See Pfeiffer, "Conversion Versions: Sultan Öljeytū's Conversion to Shī'ism (709/1309) in Muslim Narrative Sources", 41–42.

12 See Schmidtko, *The Theology of al-Allāma al-Ḥillī*, 49–51; *idem*, "Ḥelli, Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. Moṭahhar", *EnIr*, 12:164–69 (166).

13 See al-Ḥillī, *Istiqṣā' al-naẓar*, 31–33.

14 For instance, al-Samarqandī criticises Ash'arī positions on God's speech and on the obligation that cannot be met (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*). See al-Samarqandī, *al-Ṣaḥā'if al-ilāhiyya*, 358–59, 470; cf. al-Samarqandī, *Science of the Cosmos and the Soul*, 54, fn. 1.

15 The evidence for al-Samarqandī's stay in Tabriz is his remark in his *Ilm al-āfāq wa-l-anfus* that in this city in 688/1289–90 he saw a colourful halo around the Sun. See al-Samarqandī, *Science of the Cosmos and the Soul*, 221–22. On al-Samarqandī's life and works, see Gholamreza Dadkhah's Persian introduction to his edition of Shams

length of his stay, his *Ṣaḥāʾif* was the subject of study in Tabriz at the time.¹⁶ Although al-Samarqandī was not Shīʿī, he was inclined, possibly under the influence of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, to Shīʿī doctrines in some theological positions including human will.¹⁷

Interest in Ashʿarī theology was intensified following Öljaitü's death. Some time before 724/1324, Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, who has already been mentioned regarding his commentary on *Ṭawālīʿ al-anwār*, wrote a commentary on *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, titled *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*. Although *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād* itself is a Twelver Shīʿī creed, al-Iṣfahānī wrote his commentary from an Ashʿarī perspective. This work was dedicated to Tāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Shāh (d. 724/1324), the vizier of the Ilkhan Abū Saʿīd Bahādur Khān (r. 716–36/1316–35). However, soon after the composition of this work, al-Iṣfahānī left the Ilkhanate territory for Syria and Egypt.¹⁸

It was a few decades before another scholar was able to take on the authoritative stature of al-Bayḍāwī. The one who achieved this was ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355–56).¹⁹ Al-Ījī reportedly started teaching as early as 712/1313. In his *Tārīkh-i ʿUljāyṭū*, ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī Kāshānī said he was a teacher at the Madrasa-yi Sayyār, the *madrasa* which accompanied the Ilkhan wherever he went.²⁰ However, to our knowledge, al-Ījī only became active as an author a decade after this.²¹ The first version of the *Mawāqif*, which was one of his earliest works, is dedicated to the chief minister of the Ilkhan Abū Saʿīd, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 736/1336), the son of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh (d. 717/1318),

al-Dīn al-Samarqandī's *Science of the Cosmos and the Soul*, 13–82; Eichner, *Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy*, 379–424.

16 Transcription of several copies of al-Samarqandī's *al-Ṣaḥāʾif*, and the authors' commentary on the same work, titled *al-Maʾārif*; signifies its popularity among the scholars of the city. See Ḥakīm, "*Kitābhā-yi Kitābat shuda dar Rabʿ-i Rashīdī*", 67.

17 See Eichner, "Willensfreiheit und Handlungstheorie", 178–98; Dadkhah's Persian introduction to his edition of Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī's *Science of the Cosmos and the Soul*, 54–60.

18 al-Iṣfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid*, 1: 91, 116.

19 On ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī's life, see van Ess, "Neue Materialien zur Biographie des ʿAḍudaddīn al-Ījī", 270–83; Görgün, "İci, Adudüddin Kadi Ebü'l-Fazl Abdurrahman b. Rükneddin b. Abdurrahman (ö. 756/1355)".

20 See Kāshānī, *Tārīkh-i ʿUljāyṭū*, 108. Al-Ījī is listed as teaching in that madrasa along with Nizām al-Dīn al-Nisābūrī (d. 728/1328–29), Burhān al-Dīn al-ʿIbrī, Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī, Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, and the latter's son Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 771/1370).

21 The earliest record that we have of al-Ījī's writings is in Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī's *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, where *al-Mawāqif*, *Muntahā l-suʿl wa-l-amal*, and *al-Fawāʿid al-Ghiyāthiyya* were mentioned. See Mustawfī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, 698. These three works must have been completed after 727/1328 when their dedicatee Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad was appointed as the vizier and by 730/1330 when *Tārīkh-i guzīda* was composed.

who was appointed in 727/1328. Apparently, al-Ījī's mastery of theological discussion was a decisive reason for his becoming a favourite of the vizier.²²

In the introduction to the *Mawāqif*, al-Ījī expressed his disappointment with the existing Ash'arī theological works for being either too short or unnecessarily long, or unsatisfactory with regard to their intended goals or at best persuasive, or unscrupulous or repetitive.²³ He was clearly of the view that existing Ash'arī theological works did not respond sufficiently to the theological challenges of the time. In his *Mawāqif*, al-Ījī responds to the Shī'ī doctrines promoted in the previous decades by al-Ḥillī and other Shī'ī theologians.²⁴ Moreover, he reacts to the positions of al-Samarqandī.²⁵ He also comments on Ibn 'Arabī's mysticism, which at the time had a prominent representative in Tabriz, namely 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 736/1335).²⁶ Above all, he responded to the positions of philosophers, which he seems to have regarded as the most challenging of all current intellectual positions. Indeed, as Abdelhamid Sabra indicates, the primary target of this work is to present a confident *kalām* discourse on the offensive against *falsafa*, and subsequently astronomy, which obtained its theoretical principles from *falsafa*.²⁷ In so doing, al-Ījī was positioning his *kalām* discourse apart from that of some Ash'arī theologians of the time, whose theological discourse had common ground with the philosophers. Burhān al-Dīn al-'Ibrī, who studied astronomy with the major astronomer of Tabriz, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 910/1311), seems to have represented this type of Ash'arī theologians of the time.²⁸ The same applies to

22 See Khwāndamīr, *Tārīkh-i ḥabīb al-siyar*, 3:224–25.

23 See al-Ījī's introduction to *al-Mawāqif*, 4–5; Sabra, "Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islamic Theology".

24 Al-Ījī criticizes Shī'ī theological positions in various occasions throughout the *Mawāqif*. However, the most fundamental criticism appears in the subsection on *imāma* (al-Mawqif 6, al-Marṣad 4). See Ījī's introduction to *al-Mawāqif*, 395–414.

25 Among others, he responded to al-Samarqandī's criticisms of Ash'arī theologians on the question of human will. See Eichner, "Willensfreiheit und Handlungstheorie", 180–84.

26 See, for instance, al-Ījī's criticisms of some Sufis on the question of unification with God, *al-Mawāqif* (al-Mawqif 5, al-Marṣad 2, al-Maṣṣad 5), p. 275. In the last decade of Ilkhanid period, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī resided and taught at the *Rab'-i Rashīdī*, while enjoying the patronage of the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad. See Ḥakīm, "*Kitābhā-yi kitābat shuda dar Rab'-i Rashīdī*", 73–79.

27 See Sabra, "Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islamic Theology", 19. See also *idem*, "Kalām Atomism as an alternative Philosophy to Hellenizing Falsafa", 199–272; *idem*, "The Simple Ontology of Kalām Atomism", 68–78. Morrison, "What was the purpose of Astronomy in al-Ījī's *Kitāb al-Mawāqif fi 'Ilm al-Kalām*?" pp. 202–29; Dhanani, "*Al-Mawāqif fi 'ilm al-kalām* by 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī", 375–96.

28 Burhān al-Dīn al-'Ibrī was a student of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī and received an *ijāza* from the latter. See Pourjavady and Schmidtke, "Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311) as a Teacher", 21–22. His range of interests included philosophy and astronomy. However, as mentioned above, he also commented on the *Tawālī'*. To what extent he treated philosophy and

Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, who in his theological works represents a more philosophically inclined positions.²⁹

2 Al-Ījī's Works

Besides theology, the range of al-Ījī's writings included legal theories, semantics, dialectic, rhetoric, the literary disciplines, ethics and, to some extent, history. Notably, he did not show much interest in logic.³⁰ To the best of our knowledge, al-Ījī composed the following works:

1. *al-Mawāqif (al-sulṭāniyya) fī 'ilm al-kalām*: Our knowledge that this work is dedicated first to Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad is based on a report by Ḥājji Khalīfa.³¹ Presumably, Ḥājji Khalīfa had seen a copy of this work with the dedication to Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad. This first recension must have been completed before 730/1330 since the work is mentioned in the *Tārīkh-i Guzīda* by Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī (d. 744/1344), which was completed in that year.³² About twenty years later, al-Ījī dedicated the revised version of the work to Abū Ishāq Īnjū (r. 742/1341–758/1356), this time with the title *al-Mawāqif al-sulṭāniyya*.³³ Al-Ījī's model for the structure of the work was mainly al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*.³⁴ It consists of six large chapters (*mawāqif*): (1) Introduction (*fī l-muqaddimāt*), (2) on general matters in metaphysics (*al-umūr al-āmma*), (3) on accidents (*al-a'rāḍ*), (4) on substances (*al-jawāhir*), (5) on theology proper (*ilāhiyyāt*), (6) on matters of tradition (*sam'īyyāt*), with a subsection on *imāma* and an appendix (*tadhyīl*) on sects. According to al-Ījī's student, Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. 786/1384) the first recension of the work contained the beginning of the text up to the discussion of the creation of

kalām separately is something which needs further investigation. Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī who also commented on the *Ṭawālī'* had likewise interest in astronomy.

- 29 For example Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī argues that God's attributes are not super-added, and that the Necessary Being's essence is identical to His existence, which are both Avicennan rather than classical Ash'arī positions. See al-Iṣfahānī, *Tasdid al-qawā'id*, 1:257–69; 2:938–41.
- 30 One of the exceptional occasions, where al-Ījī dealt with logic was in his commentary on the opening part of Ibn al-Ḥājjib's *al-Mukhtaṣar*. See al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-'Aḍud 'alā Mukhtaṣar*, 8–33.
- 31 Ḥājji Khalīfa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:1891.
- 32 See Mustawfī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, 698. On the date of completion of *Tārīkh-i Guzīda*, See Melville, "Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī", *EnIr*, 11:631–34.
- 33 See van Ess, "Neue Materialien zur Biographie des 'Aḍudaddīn al-Īǧī", 276.
- 34 See Eichner, *Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy*, 425–72.

- actions (*khalq al-a'māl*) in Chapter 5.³⁵ This means that Chapter 6 and the appendix (*tadhyīl*) of the work which both include some harsh criticisms of the Shī'īs were added to the work only in the second recension. The appendix, on various Muslim sects, is based on Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī's (d. 641/1243) discussion on this subject in his *Abkār al-aḥkār*.³⁶
2. *al-Fawā'id al-Ghiyāthiyya fī 'ulūm al-balāgha*:³⁷ an abridgment of the section on rhetoric (i.e., part III) from Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī's (d. 626/1229) *Miftāḥ al-'ulūm*, containing an introduction and two chapters on *'ilm al-ma'ānī* and *'ilm al-bayān*. Like *al-Mawāqif*, this work is also dedicated to the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad³⁸ and since it is mentioned in the *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, it must have been composed before 730/1330.³⁹ An early copy of this work, dated 750/1349 can be found in MS Millī Malik 1789/3.⁴⁰
 3. A Commentary on Ibn al-Ḥājjib's (d. 646/1249) Abridgement (*Mukhtaṣar*) of His Own *Muntahā l-su'l wa-l-amal fī 'ilmay al-uṣūl wa-l-jadal*:⁴¹ This work is on the methodology of the law and dialectic. Similar to the *Mawāqif*, it might have had two recensions. The first one must have been completed by 730/1330, as it is mentioned in the *Tārīkh-i guzīda*. The second recension was completed on 26 Sha'bān 734/2 May 1334. This work (at least in its second recension) is also dedicated to the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad.⁴²
 4. *Jawāhir al-kalām*:⁴³ The second work by al-Ījī on *kalām*, dedicated to the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad. Its structure corresponds more or less to *al-Mawāqif*. However, it is a shorter work. It contains the following chapters: 1) the preliminaries (*al-muqaddimāt*), 2) general matters in metaphysics (*al-umūr al-'amma*), 3) accidents, 4) substance, 5) on theology proper (*ilāhiyyāt*).

35 See below, pp. 353–55.

36 See Gömbeyaz, "Fırak Literatürüne Dolaylı Ancak Etkili Bir Katkı: Âmidî Tasnifini Meşhur Eden Müteteklim: Adudüddin el-İcî".

37 Ed. 'Ashiq Ḥusayn, Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī, 1990.

38 See van Ess, "Neue Materialien zur Biographie des 'Aḍudaddīn al-Ījī", 277.

39 See Mustawfī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, 698.

40 For the description of the codex which contains this manuscript see below, fn. 66.

41 Published under the title *Sharḥ al-'Aḍud 'alā Mukhtaṣar al-muntahā l-uṣūl* by Fādī Naṣīf and Ṭāriq Yaḥyā.

42 See Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:1853. For a study of this work, see Başoğlu, "Müteahhir Dönem Fikih Usulünde Adudüddin el-İcî'nin Şerhu'l-Muhtasar'ı".

43 This work was edited by al-Afifī, "Kitāb jawāhir al-kalām", 133–243. For the dedication to Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad in this work, see al-Ījī's introduction, p. 136. An old copy of this work is preserved in MS Millī Malik 1789/1, copy completed on 19 Rajab 750/3 October 1349. See Afshār and Dānishpazhūh, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i*, 5:363–65.

5. *al-Risāla al-Shāhiyya fī l-akhlāq*:⁴⁴ Most of the extant copies of this work appear with a short introduction in which the title of the work is called simply the *Risāla fī l-akhlāq*. On the title page of MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Landberg 1591 (fol. 1b) the title appears with extra information as *al-Risāla al-Shāhiyya fī l-akhlāq*. Furthermore, in the manuscript MS Milli Malik 5330, the work contains an introduction in which the author dedicates the work to Abū Ishāq Īnjū.⁴⁵ Therefore, it might be a relatively late composition. The work, which is based on Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, consists of four chapters (*maqāla*): 1) on the theoretical [aspects] (*fī l-naẓarī*); 2) on keeping and attaining moral excellence (*fī ḥifẓ al-akhlāq wa-iktisābihā*); 3) on economics (*fī siyāsāt al-manzil*); 4) on politics (*fī tadbīr al-mudun*). In writing on ethics, al-Ījī seems to have followed al-Bayḏāwī, as the latter is known to have composed a work titled *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*.⁴⁶
6. *Risālat al-Madkhal fī l-maʿānī wa-l-bayān wa-l-badīʿ* / *Mukhtaṣar fī fann al-balāgha*: a short introduction to rhetoric, containing three chapters (*maqṣad*) on the *ʿilm al-maʿānī*, *ʿilm al-bayān* and *ʿilm al-badīʿ*. The author describes the work as a brief introduction (*madkhal*) to extensive works in the field.⁴⁷ Taha Boyalık edited this work and translated it into Turkish.⁴⁸ The name of author is not mentioned in the introduction of the work, nor in its colophon. However, the treatise is attributed to al-Ījī

44 This work has been edited four times; once in Turkey with Turkish translation by Mustakim Arıcı ("Aduddīn el-İcī'nin Ahlāk Risalesi"), a second time in Germany by Süleyman Küçük ("Die Ethik des Adud ad-Dīn al-Īgī"), a third time in Iran by Muḥsin Jāhid and Majīd Mullā Yūsufi ("Risāla-ī dar akhlāq az 'Aḏud al-Dīn al-Ījī"), and a fourth time by an Egyptian scholar, Ibrāhīm Ṣalāḥ al-Hudhud (*Risālat al-akhlāq ta'līf 'Aḏud al-Dīn al-Ījī wa-sharḥuhā lil-'Allāma Ṭashkubrīzāda*). See also Arıcı, "İcī'de Ahlāk Felsefesinin Temel Meseleleri", 555–79.

45 See Afshār and Dānishpazhūh, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i*, 8:300–1.

46 See Kohlberg, "Bayḏāwī, Naṣīr-al-Dīn", 269–71. On al-Ījī's *al-Risāla al-Shāhiyya fī l-akhlāq* and its commentaries see Mustakim Arıcı, "The Question of Disposition and Virtue in 'Aḏud al-Dīn al-Ījī'".

47 Boyalık, "İcī'nin Belāgat Anlayışı", 156.

48 Boyalık, "İcī'nin Belāgat Anlayışı". The edition is based on three manuscripts: MS Ayasofya 4437/5 (held at the Süleymaniye Library), fols. 40a–44b, MS Kasıdecizāde Süleyman Sırrı 704/7 (held at the Süleymaniye Library), fols. 100a–107a and al-Azhar 306908, fols. 15a–48b. Two copies of it are known to be extant in Iran. MS Mar'ashī 6409/9, fols. 144b–150a, copied in 1104/1692–93 by 'Abd al-Bāqī b. Faḏlullāh and MS University of Tehran 902, 2 fols., copied presumably in Bahrain in the 11th/17th century. See Dirāyatī, *Fihristgān: Nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i Irān (Fankhā)*, 28:853.

in some of its copies.⁴⁹ Brockelmann also listed the work among the works of al-Ījī and referred to its copies held in Cairo.⁵⁰

7. *al-Risāla al-waḍ'īyya*: It is a short piece on the philosophy of language (or semantics), and it might be the first treatise of its kind.⁵¹ So far, no copy of this work that includes the author's introduction has been identified. It is likely that the work is an addendum to *al-Fawā'id al-Ghiyāthiyya*. Recently, the work has been translated into Turkish.⁵²
8. *Risāla fī ādāb al-baḥth*: This is a short treatise,⁵³ whose extant copies have neither the author's introduction nor his colophon. Hence, its date of composition and whether or not the work was dedicated to an authority is unknown. The treatise has been translated into Turkish.⁵⁴
9. **Remarks Related to a Discussion in Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī's (d. 538/1144) *al-Kashshāf* about one of the Qur'ānic Verses of the Challenge (Q. 2:23, *fa-tū bi-sūratin min mithlihi*):**⁵⁵ This discussion starts with a comment by al-Ījī and follows with the responses to it by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Jārbardī (d. 746/1345–46). Al-Ījī then responded to al-Jārbardī. One of his students, Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, also responded to al-Jārbardī. The discussion follows with statements by several scholars

49 For example, the work is attributed to al-Ījī in MS Mar'ashī 6409.

50 See *GAL*, 2:270.

51 MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Landberg 471, fols. 65b–67a. For some of the other known copies of this work see *GAL*, 2:268. On the philosophical significance of this work See Weiss, "Ilm al-waḍ': An Introductory Account of a Later Muslim Philological Science", 339–56.

52 Yıldırım, "Adudüddin el-Îcî ve er-Risâlatül'l-Vaz'ıyye". Yıldırım also provided a kind of edition of this treatise based on two earlier Ottoman editions of it as well as its commentary by 'İşām al-Dīn al-İsfarāyīnī.

53 For several manuscript copies of this work, see *GAL*, 2:267.

54 Özturan, "Neyi, Nasıl Tartışabiliriz? İcî'de Tartışma Matıği". Özturan based his translation on an edition of the text appeared in *Majmū' mutūn al-kabīr*. This edition was also transcribed in the article.

55 MS Majlis 1231, fols. 128–131a, containing (1) al-Ījī's initial comment (fol. 128a); (2) al-Jārbardī's response to it (fol. 128b.); (3) al-Ījī's response to al-Jārbardī (fols. 128b–129b.); (4) Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī's response to the comment by al-Jārbardī; (5) anonymous response to al-Jārbardī's comment (fol. 130 b); Amīn al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī's response to al-Ījī (fol. 130b); al-Ījī's final comment (fol. 131a). See Ḥā'irī, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khatṭī-i*, 23/2:829–31. In his *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-kubrā* al-Subkī also includes several contributions to this controversy: (1) al-Ījī's initial comment (10:53–54.); (2) al-Jārbardī's response to it (10:48–49); (3) al-Ījī's response to al-Jārbardī (10:49–53); (4) Kamāl al-Dīn 'Abd Razzāq Kāshānī's response to it (10:53–54) (6) 'Izz al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī (10:56), Humām al-Dīn from Khwārazm (10:56–57). Al-Subkī also added his father, Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī's (d. 744/1344) response (10:57–60). However, Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī is not known to have lived at the time in Tabriz, and apparently he contributed to the discussion at a later stage.

including Amīn al-Dīn Ḥājj Bulah al-Tabrīzī (fl. 720/1320),⁵⁶ Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, ‘Izz al-Dīn [al-‘Aṭāyī] al-Tabrīzī (fl. 721/1321)⁵⁷ and a certain Humām al-Dīn from Khwārazm. Al-Ījī’s contribution consists of four pieces: (1) his first remark in which he posed the problem, (2) his response to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Jārbardī, (3) his response to Amīn al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī and (4) his final remark in which he explains his own solution to the problem.⁵⁸ Two early copies of this discussion are known: (1) MS Majlis 1231, and (2) the account presented in Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-kubrā*. According to al-Subkī, al-Ījī wrote (*katataba*) to other scholars engaged in this discussion. In other words, the discussion was in written form from the beginning. In the MS Majlis 1231, however, it says that the account is a transcription (*imlā’*), which might suggest that the discussion was oral and someone transcribed it. This assumption is supported by the fact that only the positions of these scholars are recorded and there is nothing about the addressee(s) of the pieces as would be expected in the context of formal correspondence.

10. *al-Aqā'id/al-Aqida*: This work was completed shortly before al-Ījī’s death in 756/1356. According to one of al-Ījī’s students, Iftikhār al-Dīn al-Dāmghānī (d. 775/1373–74), who wrote the first commentary on this work, the author lived only twelve days after the completion of this work.⁵⁹ Al-Ījī was said to have been imprisoned in the fortress of Diraymiyān by rebels who rose against the Muzaffarids at the end of his life.⁶⁰ In that case, the treatise or at least part of it might have been written in prison. The work does not have any specific title. Al-Dāmghānī titled his commentary on this work *al-Qawā'id al-Shamsiyya fī sharḥ al-Aqā'id al-Aḍudiyya*.⁶¹ Therefore the work must have been known as *al-Aqā'id al-Aḍudiyya* or simply *al-Aqā'id*. However, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, who appears

56 On Amīn al-Dīn Ḥājj Bulah al-Tabrīzī, see Karīmī, “Ḥājj Bulah, Amīn al-Dīn”, 289–91.

57 For the comment by “‘Izz al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī”, see al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-kubrā*, 10:56–57. Little is known about ‘Izz al-Dīn al-‘Aṭāyī al-Tabrīzī’s life. He was a poet, whose *Ishq-nāma* has been published. See al-‘Aṭāyī, *Ishq-nāma*.

58 MS Majlis 1231, fols. 128–131a, containing (1) al-Ījī’s first comment (fol. 128a); (2) al-Jārbardī’s response to it (fol. 128b); (3) al-Ījī’s response to al-Jārbardī (fol. 128b–129b); (4) Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī’s response to al-Jārbardī’s comment; (5) an anonymous response to al-Jārbardī’s comment (fol. 130b); Amīn al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī’s response to al-Ījī (fol. 130b); al-Ījī’s final comment (fol. 131a). See Ḥā’irī, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i*, 23/2:829–31.

59 See Dānishpazhūh, *Nashriyya-yi nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i*, 11–12:591.

60 See van Ess, “‘Azod al-Dīn Ījī”, *EnIr*, 3:270.

61 al-Dāmghānī, *al-Qawā'id al-Shamsiyya fī sharḥ al-Aqā'id al-Aḍudiyya*, MS Esad Efendi 13584, fol. 13a.

to have used a source, close to the time of al-Ījī refers to it as *al-Aqīda*.⁶² An old copy of this work, produced in 756/1356 or shortly after, is held at the Central Library of University of Tehran (MS Adabiyyāt, Imām Jum‘a 247).⁶³ Recently, Muhammet Ali Koca edited this work and translated it into Turkish. His edition is based on two relatively late copies of the work as well as its commentaries by al-Dāmghānī, al-Gilānī (d. 889/1484) and al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502).⁶⁴

11. *al-‘Uyūn*:⁶⁵ This is another work by al-Ījī on *kalām*. The treatise, as the author states in his succinct introduction, is a synopsis on religious principles and demonstrative sciences, containing an outline of the questions as well as an account of various opinions and arguments on them. The only known manuscript copy of this work is held at the Library of Malik in Tehran: MS Milli Malik 1789/2.⁶⁶ Since this copy was completed on 23 Rajab 750/7 October 1349, the date of its authorship must precede this date.
12. *Ishrāq al-tawārīkh*: This is a short survey of those historical facts regarded as “relevant for theologians”, as van Ess describes it, consisting of an introduction (on the lives of the prophets from Adam to Jesus) and three chapters (on Muḥammad, the major Companions, and later religious

62 See al-Kūrānī, Gloss on Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī’s (908/1502) commentary on al-Ījī’s *al-Aqā’id*, MS Nurosmāniye 2126/1, fol. 2a.

63 The codex was produced for the Muzaffarid vizier, Shams al-Dīn Dāmghānī. It contains primarily a translation of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s *Minhāj al-‘ābidīn* by ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Sa’dī al-Zahrī al-Sāwī al-Fārsī, completed on 13 Ramaḍān 756/21 September 1355 and dedicated to the vizier. See Dānishpazhūh, “Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i”, 63–66. It is notable that it was to the same vizier that Iftikhār al-Dīn al-Dāmghānī dedicated his commentary on the *Aqā’id*, and surprisingly he completed his commentary on the same date as that given in this codex. See below, pp. 358–59.

64 Koca, “Akaid-Kelām İlişkisi Bağlamında Akaid Literatürünü Okumak: İc’inin Akaid Risalesi Örneği”. The independent copies of the work used in the edition are MS Damad İbrahim 1026 (held at the Süleymaniye Library), fols. 83–84, copied in 811/1408–9 and MS Lala Ismail 706 (held at the Süleymaniye Library), fols. 155–56, copied in 1055/1645.

65 Mu‘īn al-Dīn Yazdī and Ḥāfiẓ Abrū both include “*al-‘Uyūn*” among al-Ījī’s works. See Mu‘īn al-Dīn Yazdī, *Mawāhib-i ilāhī*, 1:243; Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 1:254. Mu‘īn al-Dīn al-Junayd al-Shīrāzī attributes a commentary on al-Ījī’s *al-‘Uyūn* to Iftikhār al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dāmghānī. See Mu‘īn al-Dīn al-Junayd al-Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, 66–67. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Kh‘ānsārī also includes this as one of al-Ījī’s works. See al-Mūsawī Kh‘ānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 5:49.

66 See Afshār and Dānishpazhūh, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i*, 5:363–65. The manuscript is in a precious codex containing the following works by al-Ījī: *Kitāb al-Jawāhir* (paginated, 1–79); *al-‘Uyūn*, 80–121, and *al-Fawā’id al-Ghiyāthiyya*, 122–35. Copies of these three works were completed in Rajab 750/October 1349.

personalities up until Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).⁶⁷ A copy of this work is held at the University of California Los Angeles Library (MS A 725).⁶⁸ Like any other chronicle, the work was presumably intended to continue to cover the later period up to the lifetime of the author. There is, however, no evidence that this was accomplished. According to Ḥājji Khalifa, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh* by ‘Alī Chelebī (d. 1008/1600) is an Ottoman Turkish translation of this work.⁶⁹ Brockelmann and van Ess followed Ḥājji Khalifa in this assumption.⁷⁰ Dānīshpazhūh, however, doubts this and suggests that Chelebī’s work is a translation of *Ashraf al-tawārīkh* (or *Ishrāq al-tawārīkh*) by Qara-Ya’qūb al-Qaramānī (d. 833/1429–30).

13. *al-Maqāla al-muqarrara fī taḥqīq al-kalām al-nafsī / Risāla fī kalām Allāh / Risāla fī qidam al-kalām / Risāla fī anna l-kalām šifat Allāh*: Brockelmann attributes this work to al-Ījī and says that Kamālpāshāzāde (d. 940/1536) wrote a commentary on it. Eşref Atlas edited this work and translated it into Turkish.⁷¹ Despite being short, this piece does not seem to be a fragment taken from major works of al-Ījī. However, it is known that al-Ījī discussed God’s essential speech (*al-kalām al-nafsī*) in his other theological writings too, for example in chapter 6 of the *Mawāqif*.
14. **Poems**: In some later collections of poems, a few Arabic *rubāʿīs* are attributed to al-Ījī. In his *Bayāḍ*, composed in 782/1380–81, the Vizier Tāj al-Dīn Aḥmad presented two *rubāʿīs*.⁷² Musāfir b. Nāṣir al-Miṭṭawī (fl. 800/1397–98) also included one *rubāʿī* of al-Ījī in his *Anīs al-khalwa wa-jalīs al-salwa*.⁷³ In this poem, al-Ījī praised the Vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn on the occasion of his brutal death.

In addition to the above-mentioned works, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī attributed the following works to al-Ījī, which are otherwise unknown:⁷⁴ A commentary on

67 See van Ess, “Azod al-Dīn Ījī”, 270.

68 Dānīshpazhūh, *Nashriyya-yi nuskhahā-yi khatṭī-i*, 11–12:479.

69 See Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 1:104. Moreover, Ḥājji Khalifa presented the title of the work as *Ashraf al-tawārīkh* which seems to be mistaken.

70 See GAL, 2:271; van Ess, “Azod al-Dīn Ījī”, 270.

71 See Atlas, “Adudiddin el-Īcī’nin Kelāmullah Hakkındaki Risālesi”, 400–5. The edition is based on three manuscripts held at the Süleymaniye Library: MSS Cârullah Efendi 1875/8 (fols. 159b–160b), Hafid Efendi 33/3 (fol. 33/3) and Lâleli 2581/6 (9a–b). There are also some other copies of the work such as MS Majlis 5478 (fol. 65a) and MS University of California Los Angeles Library A 520. For the latter, see Dānīshpazhūh, *Nashriyya-yi nuskhahā-yi khatṭī-i*, 11–12:520.

72 Tāj al-Dīn Aḥmad, *Bayāḍ-i Tāj al-Dīn Aḥmad-i Vazir*, 1:389.

73 MS Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya 1670, fol. 184b.

74 See al-Kūrānī, Gloss on Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī’s commentary on al-Ījī’s *al-Aqāʿid*, MS Nurosmāniye 2126/1, fol. 2a. The author would like to thank Zacky Khairul Umam who provided him with the images of this manuscript.

al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*; a commentary on Abū Muḥammad al-Farrā' al-Baghawī's (d. 556/1122) *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna* on *ḥadīth*; commentaries on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*, *al-Muḥaṣṣal* and *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl* titled respectively *Taḥrīr al-Arbaʿīn*, *Taḥrīr al-Muḥaṣṣal* and *Taḥrīr Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*; Excerpts on logic from Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī's (d. 675/1276) *Kitāb al-Ayn*; A commentary on Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī's *Ṣaḥāʾif*, titled *Taqrīb al-Ṣaḥāʾif*; A commentary on Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm*; A commentary on the Qurʾān.⁷⁵

Moreover, in manuscript collections two extensive exegetical works are attributed to al-Ījī, but their attribution to him are doubtful. One of them is a gloss on al-Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf*, which is extant in MS Beşir Ağa 1113 (held at the Süleymaniye Library) in 389 folios. The completion date of 702/1302–3 given at the end of Sūra Aḥzāb makes the work unlikely to be by al-Ījī.⁷⁶ The other work is an independent Qurʾān exegesis, titled *Tahqīq al-tafsīr* and completed in 723/1323.⁷⁷ The name of the author is mentioned neither in the introduction nor in the author's colophon. The fact that neither bio-bibliographical works nor al-Ījī's immediate students mention this work among al-Ījī's works makes the attribution questionable.⁷⁸ This commentary is likely to be the one listed by Brockelmann as al-Ījī's commentary on al-Bayḍāwī's *Anwār al-tanzīl*.⁷⁹

Furthermore, an *ijāza* (certificate) issued by al-Ījī to one of his students is known to be extant. It was issued in Muḥarram 734/September-October 1333 in Tabriz for Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ḥamawayh al-Juwaynī (d. 770/1368–69). In it, al-Ījī testifies that al-Juwaynī has read Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī's (d. 682/1283) *Lubāb al-Arbaʿīn* (which is itself an abridgment of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*) to him. Al-Ījī's *ijāza* is found at the end of a copy of *Lubāb al-Arbaʿīn* written in al-Juwaynī's hand (MS Esad Efendī 1276). Apart from al-Urmawī's *Lubāb al-Arbaʿīn*, al-Ījī gave al-Juwaynī permission to transmit other learning that he had received from him.⁸⁰

75 Only on this work, al-Kūrānī expresses his doubt about the correctness of its attribution to al-Ījī by saying it is attributed to him (*wa-yunsab lahu*) (al-Ījī, *al-Aqāʾid*, fol. 2a).

76 MS Hacı Beşir Ağa 70 (held at the Süleymaniye), fol. 310a. See Görgün, "İcā, Adudüddin Kadi Ebü'l-Fazl Abdurrahman b. Rükneddin b. Abdurrahman (ö. 756/1355)", 70. However, Görgün considered the work an authentic work, which al-Ījī composed in his youth.

77 MS Damad İbrâhim Paşa 134. The date of its completion is written in the colophon on fol. 369b.

78 For a study of this work, see Öğmüç, "Adudüddin el-İcî'nin Tefsirciliği ve *Tahkiku't-Tefsîr* Adlı Eseri". Öğmüç considers the work to be by al-Ījī.

79 Brockelmann referred to two copies of this work, preserved in the libraries of Istanbul (MSS Köprülü 55 and Yeni Cami 38). See GAL, 2:208. I examined MS Yeni Cami 38. It contains *Tahqīq al-tafsīr*.

80 This *ijāza* was first mentioned by Heidrun Eichner. See Eichner, *Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy*, 539. It was edited by Ḥasan Anşārī. See Anşārī, "Sunnat-i ijāza-nawīsi

3 His Students

It is known that late in his life al-Ījī taught Ibn al-Ḥājib's (d. 646/1249) commentary on *Mufaṣṣal* by Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī and Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī's (d. 626/1229) *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm*.⁸¹

In his *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, al-Subkī states that al-Ījī was well off and he used to provide financial support to [his] students (*wa-inʿām ʿalā ṭalabat al-ʿilm*). Apparently some of al-Ījī's senior students kept constant company with him and even travelled with him from one city to another.⁸² In his commentary on Ibn al-Ḥājib's (d. 646/1249) *Mukhtaṣar al-Muntahā*, al-Ījī himself indicates that his companions with whom he discussed the subject, helped him to gain a more accurate understanding of the text (*wa-aṣḥābī al-mushārikūn li fi l-baḥṭh ʿan farāʾidihi wa-asrārihi wa-l-kashf ʿan kharāʾidihi wa-abkārihi*).⁸³ In his gloss on the commentary on al-Ījī's *Risāla fi ʾādāb al-baḥṭh*, ʿIṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 943/1537) speaks about twelve of al-Ījī's distinguished students, who used to attend his *majlis* and even participated in writing down the works composed by al-Ījī. Al-Isfarāyīnī names one of these twelve scholars in particular: his great-

dar ʿulūm-i dīnī", 231–45. Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ḥamawayh al-Juwaynī who received the aforementioned *ijāza* also received another *ijāza* from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Jārbardī. The latter issued the *ijāza* to al-Juwaynī for reading *al-Kashshāf* to him. This *ijāza* is found at the end of a copy of al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf*, copied by al-Juwaynī (MS Rāgib 209, fol. 589a). Al-Jārbardī also gave al-Juwaynī permission to transmit other learning he had acquired from him. The *ijāza* is not dated. But we can safely assume that he received this *ijāza* shortly after the completion of his copy of *al-Kashshāf* on 25 Dhū l-ḥijja 733/6 September 1333. For the edition of this *ijāza* see Anṣārī, "Sunnat-i ijāza-nawīsī dar ʿulūm-i dīnī", 231–45. In his *Shadd al-izār*, Muʿīn al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī provides us with some extra information about Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ḥamawayh al-Juwaynī (in the edition his name was mistakenly recorded as "Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Jawhari"). According to the latter source, al-Juwaynī studied first with a certain Najm al-Dīn Faqīh and then he studied with al-Ījī, al-Jārbardī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ḥillī and Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ṭayyibī (d. 743/1342). Later in his life, al-Juwaynī taught in Shiraz and had many students. No work by al-Juwaynī is known to be extant. According to al-Shīrāzī, he did draft some works. However, they were not transcribed in a clean copy. As a result, they became scattered and eventually lost. See al-Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, 378–79.

81 Muʿīn al-Dīn Yazdī (d. 789/1387), the author of *Mawāhib-i ilāhī dar tārikh-i āl-i Muẓaffar*, himself studied the two above-mentioned works with al-Ījī. See Yazdī, *Mawāhib-i ilāhī*, 1:243. Moreover, in 754/1353, when the Muẓaffarid Amīr Mubārīz al-Dīn (d. 759/1358) asked al-Ījī to teach his son Shāh Shujāʿ (r. 759/1358–786/1384), he chose to teach him Ibn al-Ḥājib's commentary on "Mufaṣṣal" by Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī. See Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 254–55. The same account appears in Muʿīn al-Dīn Yazdī's *Mawāhib-i ilāhī*, 1:241–45.

82 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, 10:46.

83 al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Aḥdud ʿalā Mukhtaṣar al-muntahā l-uṣūlī*, 7.

grandfather, Tāj al-Dīn al-‘Arabshāh al-Andaqānī, who might be the same as the Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥaydar al-‘Arabshāh (d. 764/1363–64), mentioned in Junayd al-Shīrāzī’s *Shadd al-izār*.⁸⁴ On another occasion, al-Isfarāyīnī included Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. after 778/1376–77) among “the twelve students”.⁸⁵ Whether or not al-Ījī’s advanced students were indeed twelve in number, as indicated by al-Isfarāyīnī, we might be inclined to assume that they included, beside Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī, Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, Shams al-Dīn Tabrizī (d. after 756/1356), and Iftikhār al-Dīn al-Dāmghānī. These students were the early commentators of al-Ījī’s works, and they started writing commentaries on the works of their teacher whilst he was still alive. In what follows, I shall introduce these major students of al-Ījī’s and examine in particular the way they engaged with the works of their teacher.

3.1 *Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Kirmānī*

Al-Kirmānī is the best known of al-Ījī’s students. Born in 717/1317,⁸⁶ he started his education in transmitted sciences with his father, Bahā’ al-Dīn Yūsuf (d. after 758/1357). He then met al-Ījī and became his disciple. Then, for a period of time, he seems to have left his master and travelled to Syria and Egypt in order to study *‘ilm al-aḥādīth*.⁸⁷ In the last decade of al-Ījī’s life, al-Kirmānī was back in his homeland accompanying al-Ījī when he travelled from Shiraz to neighboring regions. Shortly after al-Ījī’s death in 756/1356, al-Kirmānī moved to Baghdad, where soon after he completed his commentary on the *Mawāqif*, his gloss on al-Ījī’s commentary on Ibn Ḥāḥib’s *Mukhtaṣar* and his commentary on *al-Fawā’id al-Ghiyāthiyya*. In Jumādā I 758/April 1357, he issued an *ijāza* in Baghdad for the renowned Shī‘ī scholar, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Makkī (known as al-Shahīd al-Awwal, d. 786/1385) allowing him to transmit the three above-mentioned works by al-Ījī together with his commentaries on them.⁸⁸ Except for his pilgrimage to Mecca in 775/1373–74, al-Kirmānī might have

84 See al-Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, 301.

85 Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī narrated this from al-Isfarāyīnī. However, he adds some details which are not in the commentary by al-Isfarāyīnī. According to Shūshtarī, these twelve students/scholars used to attend al-Ījī’s *majlis* and even participated in writing down the works composed by al-Ījī. See Shūshtarī, *Majālis al-mu‘minīn*, 4:530.

86 The exact date of birth is given by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī as Thursday 16 Jumada 11/26 August 1317. According to Suyūṭī this date is provided by al-Kirmānī’s son in his *Dhayl al-Masālik*. See al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu‘āt*, 1:279.

87 This can be inferred from the *ijāza* he issued for Shams al-Dīn al-Makkī (d. 786/1385). For this *ijāza* see below, fn. 57.

88 This *ijāza* is recorded by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī in his *Biḥār al-anwār*. See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 107:83–84. As indicated in the *ijāza*, the original *ijāza* was written by al-Kirmānī on a copy of his *al-Kawāshif*, owned (and possibly copied) by Makkī.

stayed in Baghdad in the remaining years of his life. He died in Baghdad in 786/1384.⁸⁹ Al-Kirmānī wrote the following works:

1. A commentary on al-Ījī's *Mawāqif*, titled *al-Kawāshif al-Burhāniyya fī sharḥ al-Mawāqif al-sultāniyya*: This commentary was completed in Baghdad in Rajab 757/June–July 1356.⁹⁰ Only the last section of this work, on Islamic sects (*al-firaq al-Islāmiyya*), has been edited.⁹¹
2. A gloss on al-Ījī's commentary on Ibn Ḥājib's *Mukhtaṣar*, titled *al-Nuqūd wa-l-rudūd fī l-uṣūl*: The first draft of this work must have been written before Jumādā 1 758/April 1357 since al-Kirmānī referred to it in the *ijāza* mentioned above. However, a later version of the commentary is dated mid-Shawwāl 762/16 August 1361.⁹²
3. A commentary on al-Ījī's *al-Risāla al-Shāhiyya fī l-akhlāq*:⁹³ This commentary was written while al-Ījī was still alive; i.e., sometime before 756/1355. This can be discerned from the fact that after mentioning al-Ījī's name, al-Kirmānī added the phrase *madda ẓillahu al-ʿālī* (May God extend his shadow). Al-Kirmānī mentions that he completed the work while he resided in Kerman.⁹⁴
4. A commentary on al-Ījī's *Jawāhir al-kalām*.⁹⁵
5. A commentary on al-Ījī's *al-Fawā'id al-Ghiyāthiyya*, titled *Taḥqīq al-Fawā'id al-Ghiyāthiyya*.⁹⁶
6. A gloss on al-Bayḍāwī's *Anwār al-tanzil*.⁹⁷

89 See İsmail Hakkı, "Kirmānī, Şemseddin", 65.

90 MSS Amcazade 317 (held at the Süleymanîye Library), Majlis 3832 (Cat. 13/1867–9), Milli Malik 1046 (Cat. 1/453) and University of Tehran 8615 (Cat. 17/177).

91 It is edited under the title *al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya: dhayl kitāb sharḥ al-Mawāqif lil-Kirmānī*, by Salīma ʿAbd al-Rasūl (Baghdād: Maṭbaʿat al-Irshād, 1973).

92 MSS Milli Malik 1339, and University of Tehran 6682. In this commentary, al-Kirmānī consulted with the views of seven earlier commentators of Ibn Ḥājib's *Mukhtaṣar*.

93 There are two editions of this work: the first edited by Derya Topalcık ("Kirmānī'nin Şerh-u Ahlāk-ı Adūdiyye Adlı Eseri", MA thesis submitted at the Sakarya University, 2007). The second edition is by Mervener Yılmaz. See Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Şerhu'l-Ahlākī'l-ʿAdudiyye*, edited and translated into Turkish by Mervener Yılmaz (Ankara: Nobel-İlem Kitaplığı, 2016). The edition is based on MS Hasan Hüsnü Paşa 744, MS Raşit Efendi 1115, MS Raşit Efendi 696, MS Ömer İşbilir 49, and MS Şehit Ali Paşa 2815 (all held at the Süleymaniye Library).

94 See al-Kirmānī, *Şerhu'l-Ahlākī'l-ʿAdudiyye*, 23.

95 İsmail Hakkı, "Kirmānī, Şemseddin", 66.

96 Published in Madina: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1424/2003–4.

97 MS Ragib 151 (held at the Süleymaniye Library), 90ff; Cf. Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʿallifin*, 3:784; İsmail Hakkı, "Kirmānī, Şemseddin", 65; Lane, *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʾan Commentary*, 306.

7. A response to the critical comment by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Jārbardī in the discussion on verse 2:22.⁹⁸
8. *Ḍamā'ir al-Qur'ān*.⁹⁹
9. *al-Kawākib al-darārī fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.¹⁰⁰ This work was completed in Mecca in 775/1373–74.
10. *Unmūdhaj al-Kashshāf*.¹⁰¹
11. *Dhayl Masālik al-abṣār*.¹⁰²
12. *Risāla fī mas'alat al-kuhl*.¹⁰³

In the introduction to his commentary on the *Mawāqif*, al-Kirmānī supplies a significant note regarding the composition of the *Mawāqif*:

اعلم أن الأستاذ سؤد أولاً هذا الكتاب إلى مسألة خلق الأعمال. ثم بعد تركه عشرين سنة لفترات الزمان تصدى للإكمال. والمحصلون لشغفهم به وشغلهم له استنسخوه في زمان ذلك الإعراض قبل التصحيح، واشتغلوا به قبل النقل إلى البياض والتنقيح. فلهذا وقع في النسخ منها اختلافات كثيرة وتصحيح وغلط، واختلالات عديدة وتحريف وشطط، وليس ذلك إلا من سهو الناسخين، لا من تزلزل العلماء الراسخين. ولأجله لم يوجد في قدر المؤلف إكمالاً مثل ما وقع فيما سلف أولاً إخلالاً. فكل ما يورد في شرحه من الاعتراضات بحسب اللفظ فليس شيء منه على المصنف وتعلقاته بل على الناقل من السواد وسوء نقلاته وما تطرق إليه الضعف من طرف المعنى فيه فهو على ما ينقله عن الغير وما يدينه إذ تصوراته الخاصة ليست إلا مصححة وتصرفاته الخبصة لا توجد إلا منقحة. لا أقول إنه واجب العصمة مما يقع للبشر، لكن هذا الحكم إنما هو على سبيل الأغلب والأكثر، وإني سعت في تصحيح اللفظ إما نقلاً عن خطه إذ حصل عندي مسودة الأول، وكنت ملازماً على تأليف القدر المكمل، وإما استكشافاً منه إذ قد ساعدني التوفيق على الاستفسار بهذا التعليق قبل

98 MS Majlis 1231. See above fn. 19.

99 MS Escorial 1360 (an image of this MS can be found in Qom, Mar'ashī Library, no. 415). According to Andrew J. Lane, this is an allegorical commentary. See Lane, *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ān Commentary*, 306.

100 Published in Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1401/1908.

101 al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu'āt*, 1:279–80; Cf. ʿIsmāʾil Ḥakkī, "Kirmānī, Ṣemseddin", 66; Lane, *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ān Commentary*, 306.

102 ʿIsmāʾil Ḥakkī, "Kirmānī, Ṣemseddin", 66.

103 al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu'āt*, 1:280.

انتقاله إلى دار الأُنس وارتحاله إلى جوار القدس اللهم إلا من مفاتيح الموقف السادس إلى آخره فإنه أكملته بعد الابتلاء بهجره جزاه الله خير ما يعطي أحداً من أجر.¹⁰⁴

Know that my master first drafted this work up to the discussion on the creation of the actions. Then, after an interval of twenty years, he finally decided to complete it. However, during the time in which the author turned his attention away from the text and before it was refined, the students, who were excited by the work and eager to use it, transcribed it. They engaged with the text before the clean, edited copy was produced. For this reason, the copies of this work contain many variations, distortions, errors, the inserting of numerous alterations, things which should be avoided and deviations. This is all because of the mistakes of the copyists and not the discrepancy of [one of] the profound scholars. Therefore, one could not find in the complete form of the author's work the errors which could be found in its first draft. All the things for which he was criticized were because of the words used, and the author himself and his way of thinking are not to blame for them. Instead one should blame the one who transcribed the text from the draft and how he misread things. And if there is a weakness in terms of the sense of it, the weakness is what has been incorrectly transcribed, which has debased the text. Since his particular conceptions are all correct and the confusing articulations, [which were the results of misreading,] were initially appropriate. I don't claim that he is immune from [the sort of] error which might happen to anyone. But I say that was what happened in most cases [throughout the text]. I tried to correct words when I transcribed it from his hand since the first draft of the work was available to me. And I accompanied the author while he was writing the final part of the work and he helped me to clarify the text before passing away and transferring to the pure world, apart from the beginning of chapter six to the end of the text, which I completed after he passed away. May God reward him the best reward He grants to anyone!

According to this note, al-Ījī first wrote the draft of the text up to the section on the creation of actions (*khalq al-a'māl*, which is Chapter Five, Section Six). This draft was turned into a clean copy (*bayāḍ*) only twenty years later. Meanwhile, al-Ījī's students copied the text repeatedly and since their source

104 al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawāshif al-Burhāniyya fī sharḥ al-Mawāqif al-sultāniyya*. MS Amcazade 317 (held at the Süleymaniye Library), fols. 3a–3b.

was the draft (*sawād*), the text which they produced contained many mistakes. These mistakes subsequently led to misunderstandings and confusion. Even so, al-Kirmānī maintains that it is the scribes who should be blamed for all these mistakes and not the author. Al-Kirmānī then states that the texts that he lemmatized through his commentary is more reliable than any of the previous copies. Firstly, because he had been using the polished draft and not any of those erroneous copies, and secondly, because while he was accompanying the author, he was able to consult him personally about some passages of the text which were not clear. This he was able to do, at least for the major part of the commentary since al-Ījī died when al-Kirmānī was in the middle of chapter six of the *Mawāqif*. In this note al-Kirmānī attempts to convince the reader that al-Ījī was not responsible for the mistakes in the text. However it is in fact unlikely that the first recension of the text would have been a mere draft (*sawād*), as in that form it would have been impossible for al-Ījī to dedicate it to the vizier, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad.

In the introduction to his commentary on the *Mawāqif*, al-Kirmānī states that he is the first commentator of the text.¹⁰⁵ There is no reason to doubt this, but at the same time, it might imply that when he was about to complete his commentary (that is in 757/1356) some other students of al-Ījī had already started writing their commentaries.

3.2 *Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Tabrizī*

There is no entry on Shams al-Dīn al-Tabrizī in bio-bibliographical works. As is clear from his *nisba* he was from Tabriz. Like al-Kirmānī, he probably accompanied al-Ījī in his final years. Al-Tabrizī is known to have composed two works:

1. **A Commentary on al-Ījī's *Jawāhir al-kalām*, titled *al-Dhakhā'ir fī sharḥ al-Jawāhir*:** This work was completed in al-Ījī's lifetime, in Rajab 755/August 1354 in Sirjan (a town to the west of Kerman). The work is dedicated to 'Alā' al-Dīn b. Amīr 'Īsā bey al-Ḥusaynī.¹⁰⁶ In the introduction to this work, al-Tabrizī calls al-Ījī his master and teacher (*shaykhī wa-ustādhi*).¹⁰⁷ He informs us that al-Ījī first wrote *Mawāqif* and then wrote a synopsis of it which he titled *al-Jawāhir*.¹⁰⁸ Al-Tabrizī was probably teaching this text to students as he says that he wrote it at the request of his friends (*aṣḥābī*).

¹⁰⁵ al-Kirmānī, *Kawāshif*, fol. 3b.

¹⁰⁶ MS Fatih 3197 (held at the Süleymaniye Library), copy completed by Muḥammad Shāh b. Mūsā al-Uz'ūdī on Monday 18 Shawwal 765/19 July 1364. On the front page of the manuscript Fatih 3197, it is written *li-tilmidh al-mu'allif Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd 'urifa bi-Shams al-Tabrizī* (fol. 2a).

¹⁰⁷ MS Fatih 3197, fol. 3a.

¹⁰⁸ MS Fatih 3197, fol. 2a–b.

2. *al-Maṭālib al-ʿaliyya wa-l-maqāṣid al-saniyya fī maḥall al-kamālāt al-insāniyya*.¹⁰⁹ This work is extant in a unique manuscript, MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Wetzstein. II 1781. The author of the text does not name himself anywhere in the text. It is attributed to Shams al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī by the copyist on the folio preceding the text (fol. 86a). The work consists of an introduction and three chapters (*maqāla*): Chapter One: on the principals (*fī l-mabādīʾ*) containing 10 philosophical discussions (*abḥāth*); Chapter Two: on theology proper (*fī l-ilāhiyyāt*), containing three sections on God's existence, his essential necessity and the unity (*ittiḥād*) of his attributes with his actual existence (*wujūd ʿaynī*); Chapter Three: on ethics (*fī l-akhlāq*), with two subsections on its principles (*uṣūl*) and its applications (*furūʿ*). Al-Tabrīzī's combination of theology and ethics in this work suggests that ethics was an indispensable part of al-Ījī's thought and teachings. The author refers to al-Ījī as "Ḥujjat al-Islām quddisa sirruhu",¹¹⁰ which indicates that he wrote this work after al-Ījī's death.

3.3 *Sayf al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Abharī*

Little is known about al-Abharī's life. His reference to al-Ījī as "Our Very Learned Master (*ustādhunā al-ʿallāma*)",¹¹¹ leaves one in no doubt that he was one of his students. According to Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), al-Abharī had some quarrels and disagreements (*munāzaʿāt wa-mā jarayāt*) with his teacher.¹¹² It is, however, unclear from which source Ibn Ḥajar derived this information. Presumably, al-Abharī was one of al-Ījī's students in Tabriz. However, unlike his other students, there is no evidence that al-Abharī moved to Shiraz with his teacher. Likewise, we are unable to determine his whereabouts when he was composing his works. The following three works can be safely attributed to him:

1. **A commentary on the *Mawāqif*:** this extensive commentary was completed on 15 Rabiʿ I 767/1 December 1365. A few manuscripts of this work are extant. MSS Feyzullah 1165 and Carullah 1235 (held at the Süleymaniye Library) contain complete copies of it.¹¹³ On the front page

109 MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Wetzstein II 1781, fols. 86a–115a (Ahlwardt, 5141).

110 MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Wetzstein II 1781, fols. 688a (the first marginal note) and 700b.

111 See al-Abharī, *Hāshiya ʿalā sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-muntahā*, MS Burūjirdī 353 (held at the Burūjirdī Library in Qom), fol. 1b.

112 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 3:110.

113 Apart from MS Feyzullah 1165, there are at least two other copies of this work: Yeniciami 767, Carullah 1235 and Veliyuddin Efendi 2110. According to Brockelmann, there is also a copy of this work in MS Yeni Cami 748. See *GAL*, 2:270. The commentary might be the

of MS Yeni Cami 767, which contains a copy of al-Abharī's commentary on the *Mawāqif*, it is claimed that al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī drew upon al-Abharī's commentary on the *Mawāqif* in writing his own commentary on this work. The correctness of this claim has yet to be examined.

2. **A Gloss on *Mukhtaṣar al-muntahā*:**¹¹⁴ This is the most popular of al-Abharī's works since there are numerous copies extant. Fourteen copies are held in libraries in Iran.¹¹⁵ Many more copies are held in libraries in Turkey. It seems that this work was widely used as a textbook, particularly from late 9th/15th century onwards.
3. **A Commentary on Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm*:** Ḥājjī Khalifa attributed this work to al-Abharī.¹¹⁶

In addition, some other works are attributed to al-Abharī, but their attribution to him is uncertain:

1. **A Commentary on *al-Risāla al-Shāhiyya fī l-akhlāq*:**¹¹⁷ MS Çorum Hasan Pasha 2131/3 (fols. 14b–22b) held at the Halk Kütüphanesi, contains a commentary on the *Risāla al-Shāhiyya fī l-akhlāq* which is attributed to al-Abharī. There is, however, a reason to doubt this attribution. A certain Müneccimbaşı Ahmed Dede who wrote a commentary on the same *Risāla* a couple of centuries later, cites al-Abharī's commentary on the same work. The citations, however, are not from the commentary preserved in the MS Çorum Hasan Pasha 2131/3.¹¹⁸
2. **A Commentary on al-Ījī's *al-Fawā'id al-Ghiyāthiyya*:** found in MS Hacı Selim Agha 1044, this commentary was completed in 778/1376.¹¹⁹ This copy does not contain any introduction, and the name of the commentator is not mentioned in the text. Therefore, there is no way of verifying the note on the front page which attributes the work to Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī.
3. **A Gloss on al-Ījī's treatise on *Ādāb al-baḥth*:** It is attributed to Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī in MS National Library of Ankara 4791/3 (fols. 8b–9a).

partially extant one in MS Fatih 3117 (held at the Süleymaniye Library, fols. 1b–208a). The copy does not contain the commentator's introduction. However, on its title page, it is attributed to "Sayf Abharī". The volume ends at the end of the discussion on Temperament (al-Muqif 4, Qism 4, Maqṣad 2). The work was also referred to by Ḥājjī Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:1891.

¹¹⁴ MS Michigan Isl. 38; Bodleian March 330.

¹¹⁵ See Dirāyatī, *Fihristgān: Nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i Īrān (Fankhā)*, 12:22–23.

¹¹⁶ See Ḥājjī Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:1762.

¹¹⁷ This commentary has been edited. See al-Abharī, *Şerhu'l-Ahlākī'l-ʿAdudiyye*. The edition is based on MS Çorum Hasan Pasha 2131/3 (fols. 14b–22b) held at the Halk Kütüphanesi.

¹¹⁸ See Ömer Türker's introduction to his edition of al-Abharī's *Şerhu'l-Ahlākī'l-ʿAdudiyye*, 12.

¹¹⁹ See the colophon of MS Hacı Selim Agha 1044, fol. 185a. The copy was completed on 21 Sha'bān 886/15 October 1481 by ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Yūsuf.

4. **A Commentary on Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī's (d. 682/1365) *Maṭālī' al-anwār*:** This work, on logic, is preserved in MS Carullah 1421 (fols. 2a–177b). This manuscript is incomplete at both the beginning and the end. Hence the preface and the colophon are missing. On the front page (fol. 1a) there are two notes by Walī l-Dīn Jār Allāh Efendi (d. 1151/1738). In one, he identifies the work as *Sharḥ al-Maṭālī'* and attributes it to Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī, arguing that al-Abharī explicitly referred to his own commentary on al-Urmawī's *Maṭālī'* in his commentary on the *Mawāqif* as well as in his gloss on the *Mukhtaṣar*. In the second note Jār Allāh says that throughout this commentary Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī is referred to as *al-Shāriḥ*. This indicates that the commentary is based on Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Lawāmī' al-anwār fī sharḥ Maṭālī' al-anwār* regardless of whether it is genuinely by Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī or not.
5. **A Collection of Glosses on Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Muḥākamāt bayn Sharḥay al-Ishārāt*:** This work is preserved in MS Carullah 1282 and was copied by Jār Allāh himself in Mecca in 1103/1691–92. The glosses were collected from the margins (*al-mujtama'a min al-ḥawāshī*) of manuscripts of the *Muḥākamāt*. However, in other copies of these glosses, such as MS Leiden Or. 190 and MS Feyzullah 1184, the work is attributed to al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī.¹²⁰

3.4 *Iftikhār al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Naṣr Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Dāmghānī*

Al-Dāmghānī was said to be one of the prominent scholars (*a'yān*) of al-Ījī's *majlis*.¹²¹ He probably moved to Shiraz together with Ījī and resided there until his death in 775/1373–74. Later in life, he was active at the court of the Muzaffarid Shāh Shujā' in Shiraz. According to Junayd al-Shīrāzī, he was a Ḥanafī scholar and a prolific author who composed around one hundred works,¹²² but only a few of them are extant:

1. **A Commentary on al-Ījī's *al-'Aqā'id*, titled *al-Qawā'id al-Shamsiyya fī sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-'Aḍudiyya*.**¹²³ This commentary, which appears to

¹²⁰ It is noteworthy that the last two works are both attributed to al-Abharī by Jār Allāh Efendi. Jār Allāh's library contains copies of al-Abharī's *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (MS Carullah 1235) and his *Ḥāshiya 'alā Mukhtaṣar al-muntahā* (MS 470) too.

¹²¹ See al-Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, 67.

¹²² See al-Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, 66–67.

¹²³ There are at least three copies of this work in the Süleymaniye Library: MS Ayasofya 2307, completed in 886/1481–82; MS Hacı Mahmud 1348, completed on 27 Rabi' 1 1294/11 April 1877 by Ḥajjī 'Alī b. Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥusayn al-Wahbī; MS Esad Efendi 3584 (fols. 13a–31b), completed on 5 Shawwāl 1165/16 August 1752 by Muḥammad al-Kafawī. According to Muṣṭafā Dirāyatī, there are two manuscripts of this work in the libraries

be the first ever written on the *‘Aqā’id* was completed on 13 Ramaḍān 756/20 September 1355. It was dedicated to the vizier, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dāmghānī. Those extant copies of this commentary, which I was able to examine, namely MS Esad Efendi 13584 and MS Hacı Mahmud 1348, are based on a recension of the commentary produced by one of the commentator’s students. In the preface the author is introduced as “the master of the world, the great and most noble chief, the most learned of the era and the expert of the time, the sultān of the scholars Iftikhār al-Dīn al-Dāmghānī, may God raise his station and expand his chest in directing the Muslims”.¹²⁴ Obviously this is not the manner in which the commentator would have referred to himself. Reference to him as the master (*al-mawlā*) makes it likely that this modification to this part of the introduction was made by one of al-Dāmghānī’s students. The formulaic expressions of respect which appear after his name, indicates that this was done while the commentator was still alive.

2. *Hall mā lā yanḥall*:¹²⁵ In his introduction to this work the author explains that in a *majlis* at the court of Shāh Shujā’ there was a debate between scholars about whether or not ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī’s objection to the position of al-Zamakhsharī on the Qur’ānic verse *fa-’tū bi-sūratin min mithlihi* (2:23) was justified. Subsequently Shāh Shujā’ ordered al-Dāmghānī to write a treatise on this matter to clarify it.
3. **A Commentary on al-Zamakhsharī’s *al-Kashshāf*, titled *Kāshif al-sajāf ‘an wajh al-Kashshāf***: According to Mu’in al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, the book contains seven volumes.¹²⁶ A holograph of the first part (*juzʿ*) of this work can be found in the Awqāf Library in Baghdad (MS Awqāf 3003). According to the colophon of this manuscript, this part was completed in Rabiʿ 1 774/August–September 1372.¹²⁷ If this is indeed the date of composition,

of Iran: MS Riḍawī 216 and MS Qom, Masjid-i Jāmiʿ, 2849/1. See Dirāyatī, *Fihristwāra-yi*, 8:307. There is also a copy at the University of California Los Angeles: MS UCLA, D 291. See Dānīshpazhūh, *Nashriyya-yi nuskhahā-yi khatṭī-i*, 11–12:65.

- 124 See al-Dāmghānī, *al-Qawāʿid al-Shamsiyya*, MS Hacı Mahmud 1348, fol. 2a (or MS Esad Efendi 13548, fol. 13a):

المولى العالم المقتدى الأعظم الأكرم علامة العصر نخير الدوران سلطان علماء الزمان افتخار الملة
والدين محمد الدامغانى أعلى الله قدره وشرح لإرشاد المسلمين صدره

- 125 MS Majlis 1231, fols. 131a–133a, copied between 1030/1620 and 1040/1640. See Ḥāʾirī, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khatṭī*, 23/2:833.

- 126 See al-Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, 67.

- 127 See al-Jibūrī, *Fahras al-makhtūṭāt*, 1137–38. Andrew J. Lane provided the full title of this work, on the basis of *al-Fihris al-shāmil*, as follows: *Kāshif al-sijāf ‘an wajh al-Kashshāf*. See Lane, *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʾān Commentary*, 88n, 305. Cf. *al-Fihris al-shāmil*, 2:516.

and not merely of transcription, the work should be considered one of the author's last compositions.

4. **Rawshanāyī-nāma:** This is a Persian *mathnawī* dedicated to Shāh Shujā' consisting of 516 lines. A copy of this work is found on the margins of MS University of Tehran 241 (fols. 561–67).¹²⁸
5. **One Persian *ghazal*:** The earliest source for this poem is *Mūnis al-aḥrār* by Muḥammad b. Badr Jājarmī, completed in 741/1340–41 who refers to Iftikhār al-Dīn al-Dāmghānī as our great master (*mawlānā l-a'ẓam*). Al-Dāmghānī's penname as appears in this poem was Iftikhār.¹²⁹

Besides the above works, according to Mu'īn al-Dīn Junayd al-Shīrāzī, al-Dāmghānī wrote the following works, none of which are known to be extant: (6) a commentary on al-Ījī's *al-Mawāqif*, (7) a commentary on al-Ījī's *Jawāhir al-kalām*, (8) a commentary on al-Ījī's *al-'Uyūn* (9) a commentary on al-Ījī's *al-Fawā'id al-Ghiyāthiyya*, (10) a commentary on al-Ījī's *Risāla fī ādāb al-baḥth*, (11) a commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Ishārāt*, titled *Tanqīḥ al-'ibārāt fī tawḍīḥ al-Ishārāt*, (12) a commentary on al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār*, (13) a commentary on al-Bayḍāwī's *Minḥāj al-uṣūl*, (14) a commentary on Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ al-'ulūm*, (15) a commentary on *al-Mu'taqad lil-shaykh al-kabīr* (Ibn Khafīf (d. 371/981–82)), (16) *al-Madārik* on logic, (17) *al-Makshūf* again on *Tafsīr*.¹³⁰

Commentaries/glosses written on al-Ījī's works by his students

al-Ījī's Works	al-Kirmānī	al-Tabrizī	al-Abharī	al-Dāmghānī	Total
<i>al-Mawāqif</i>	X	X	X	X	4
<i>al-Jawāhir</i>	X	X		X	3
<i>al-Fawā'id al-Ghiyāthiyya</i>	X		X	X	3
<i>Risāla fī ādāb al-baḥth</i>			X	X	2
<i>Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-muntahā</i>	X		X		2
<i>al-'Uyūn</i>				X	1
<i>al-Risāla al-Shāhiyya fī l-akhlāq</i>	X		X		2
<i>al-'Aqā'id</i>				X	1

128 This *mathnawī* was edited by Ḥasan Dhulfaqārī (Dāmghān).

129 See Jājarmī, *Mūnis al-aḥrār*, 2:110. The poem appears also in Mu'allim's *Yatīmat al-durar*, 58 and Iskandar Mushī's *Jung*, fol. 245b. I am thankful to Arham Moradi who brought these sources to my attention.

130 al-Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, 66–67.

Apart from the above-mentioned scholars, some other contemporaneous scholars who were not students of al-Ījī commented on his writings. One of them was the Shī'ī scholar, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Āmulī who wrote a critical gloss on al-Ījī's commentary on Ibn al-Ḥājjib's *Mukhtaṣar al-Muntahā*. Unfortunately, no manuscript copy of this gloss is known to be extant, and our knowledge of it is merely based on an account given by Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī in his *Majālis al-mu'minīn*.¹³¹ The *terminus ante quem* for this gloss is determined by its author's death in 753/1352. This means that it was written whilst al-Ījī was still alive. Another example is Muḥammad b. Ḥājji b. Muḥammad al-Bukhārī al-Sa'īdī (fl. 760/1359), who wrote a commentary on *al-Fawā'id al-Ghiyāthiyya*, completed in 760/1359 and dedicated to Shāh Shujā'.¹³² Another Bukhārī, 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, known as 'Alā' al-Nabihī (fl. 770/1369), wrote a commentary on al-Ījī's *Jawāhir al-kalām*, completed in Isfahan in Rajab 770/February–March 1369.¹³³ The work is dedicated to the ruler of Isfahan at the time, who was Quṭb al-Dīn Shāh Maḥmūd, a brother of Shāh Shujā'. Another scholar was Bahā' al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Baḥrābādī al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 786/1384–85), who wrote a commentary on al-Ījī's *al-'Aqā'id al-'Aḍudiyya*. Al-Isfarāyīnī was one of the descendants of the Kubrawī Sufi shaykh, Sa'd al-Dīn al-Ḥamūya (d. 650/1260), whose writings include *Makārim al-sharī'a* and *al-Qawānīn fī l-manṭiq*. He was active in Shiraz and died there shortly after the death of Shāh Shujā' in 786/1384–85 and was buried near the latter's tomb, which might be an indication that he was associated with Shāh Shujā'.¹³⁴ Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1391–92) was another scholar of the time who commented on al-Ījī's works. He wrote a gloss on al-Ījī's commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar*, completed in 786/1384.

Some modern scholars included al-Taftāzānī among al-Ījī's students.¹³⁵ This assumption is mainly based on Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's note in *Inbā' al-ghumr bi-anbā' al-umr*, where he describes al-Taftāzānī as a pupil of al-Ījī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, without giving any time or place for his studies with either them. But as Madelung observes, this account is not reliable.¹³⁶ It is, in fact, unlikely

131 Shūshtarī, *Majālis al-mu'minīn*, 4:528–30.

132 See Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:130. Van Ess marks this commentary as the earliest commentary written on *Fawā'id Ghīyāthiyya*. See van Ess, "'Aḏud al-Dīn Ījī", 270.

133 MS British Library, Or. 3743 (125 fols.). See Rieu, *Supplement*, 113–14, no. 188. Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 1:616. Referring to the same work, Brockelmann by mistake listed it among the commentaries on the *Mawāqif*. See GAL, 2:270.

134 See al-Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, 460.

135 Van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des 'Aḏudaddīn al-Īcī*, 32; cf. Eichner, *Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy*, 425.

136 Madelung, "Taftāzānī", *ET*, 2, 88b.

that al-Ījī ever taught al-Taftāzānī. In his gloss on al-Ījī's *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, al-Taftāzānī praises al-Ījī highly without referring to him as his teacher.¹³⁷

In 760/1358–59, Ibrāhīm the son of Fakhr al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Jārbardī, who was residing at the time in Damascus, wrote *al-Sayf al-ṣārim 'alā 'unuq al-Aḍud al-ẓālīm*. In this work, Ibrāhīm al-Jārbardī defended the position of his father on the controversy about one of the Qur'ānic verses of the challenge (Q. 2:23, *fa-tū bi-suratin min mithlihi*).¹³⁸

Moreover, in the manuscript collections there are still some early commentaries on the works of al-Ījī whose authors are yet to be identified. For example MS University of Tehran, Mishkāṭ 1265, contains a commentary on the *Mawāqif*, which was completed on 15 Shawwāl 770/23 May 1369. The commentator refers to the author as well as Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ṭayyibī (d. 743/1342–43) as his masters.¹³⁹ MS University of Tehran 2924 contains an extensive commentary (213 folios) on al-Ījī's *al-Risāla al-Shāhiyya fī l-akhlāq*. The manuscript is incomplete at the beginning (and the end), lacking the first part of the preface where the author presumably introduced himself. In the remaining part of the preface the commentary is dedicated to Jalāl al-Dīn Tūrān Shāh (d. 787/1385), the vizier of Shāh Shujā'.¹⁴⁰

Three decades after al-Ījī's death, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī moved to Shiraz and started writing commentaries on works by al-Ījī. In all he wrote commentaries and glosses on six of them, namely the *Mawāqif*, *al-'Aqā'id al-Aḍudiyya*, *al-Fawā'id al-Ghiyāthiyya*, *al-Risāla al-waḍ'iyya*, *Risāla fī ādāb al-baḥṭh* and *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-muntahā*.¹⁴¹ These exegetical works gradually overshadowed almost all the previous commentaries on al-Ījī's works. Although he is not always explicit about his sources, al-Jurjānī surely made use of earlier commentaries on these works.

137 As Madelung has pointed out, beside the story of Ibn Ḥajar, a story reported by Ibn al-ʿImād (*Shadharāt*, 6:319–22) about al-Taftāzānī's having at first been the most stupid among al-Ījī's pupils. This story likewise is entirely fictitious. See Madelung, "Taftāzānī", *EI*², 88b.

138 See al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, 10:60–78.

139 See Dānīshpazhūh, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khatṭī-i kitābkhāna-yi dānīshgāh-i Tīhrān*, 7:2743–44.

140 The commentary is misattributed to Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī in the catalogue. See Dānīshpazhūh, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khatṭī-i kitābkhāna-yi markazī-i dānīshgāh-i Tīhrān*, 10:1783. See also Lameer, *The Arabic version of Ṭūsī's Nasirean Ethics*, 3. I am grateful to Joep Lameer who brought this commentary to my attention.

141 For al-Jurjānī's commentary/gloss on these works, See Shakībāniyā & Pourjavady, "Kitābshināsi-i Sayyid Sharīf-i Jurjānī", (144–47, 161, 172, 174–75); van Ess, *Die Träume der Schulweisheit: Leben und Werk des ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ġurġānī (gest. 816/1413)*, 54–55, 60, 64–66.

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Ash‘arism through an Akbarī Lens

The Two “Taḥqīqs” in the Curriculum Vitae of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī
(d. 1019/1690)

Harith Ramli

يا هذا ما في الكون أقل من الذرة، وأنت لا تدركها، فمن لا يعرف الذرة كيف
يعرف ما هو أدق منها بتحقيق؟

Oh you! What in Creation is slighter than the smallest particle? And you can't perceive it! Thus, how can one who does not know the atom know something which is more subtle than it, with full verification?

MANṢŪR AL-ḤALLĀJ, *Tāshīn al-tanzīh*



The relationship between the Sufi tradition and the different schools of Islamic theology is one of the more challenging terrains of Islamic intellectual history.¹ This is especially the case for the post-Mongol period, when the teachings of the Ishrāqī and Akbarī traditions spread across the vast reaches of the Muslim world, and Sufi shaykhs occupied well-endowed institutions that had world conquerors as their patrons. More significantly, the language and concerns of Sufism had infiltrated most corners of the intellectual sphere, and we find eclectic Sufi-scholars such as Mulla Jāmī (d. 871/1492), “employing a single philosophical idiom to express ... disparate strands of thought” and integrating them into the formation of “a single philosophical discourse”, building on the merging of *kalām* and *falsafa* after the Avicennan turn.² The difficulty of unpacking the complex writings of such *hukamāʾ*, as James Morris has pointed out, is due to the missing first and third of three elements which are crucial to understanding advanced Sufi texts: (a) the experiential Sufi ground, (b) doctrinal and theoretical elaboration and (c) its broader dialectical context (i.e. “competing or ostensibly opposing doctrines, methods and

1 So far, there have been few attempts to build on the comprehensive approach of Louis Massignon in this field. For more recent studies, see the contributions in Shihadeh (ed.), *Sufism and Theology*.

2 Spannaus, “Theology in Central Asia”, 595.

interpretations, usually expressed in the shared technical vocabulary of post-Avicennan *kalām*").³

Khaled El-Rouayheb's recent ground-breaking work *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century* has presented a revised picture of intellectual life in Arabic-speaking Ottoman provinces during the pre-modern era, which now allows us a much better toolkit with which we can approach the third element. In contrast to the predominant view that has characterised this period as stagnant and devoid of originality, he demonstrates that this was a period enriched by the introduction of new books in various intellectual disciplines from North Africa and Persia and a strong emphasis on the idea of verification (*taḥqīq*). El-Rouayheb's choice of the term "verification" to translate "*taḥqīq*" allows us the possibility of understanding at multiple levels of discourse, not only relating to the rationalist dimension of intellectual life in this period, but also the equal importance of a bold and open espousal of mystical teachings and practice among many leading figures, particularly the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators. In other words, *taḥqīq* could as easily mean "spiritual verification" or "realisation" in some circles as it would mean "intellectual verification" in others.⁴ In many cases, the two seem to go hand in hand, with the path of the rational verification playing the role of a preparatory training ground alongside spiritual practice and initiation, leading the way to spiritual realisation.

3 Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters, Part II (Conclusion)", 110.

4 It should be noted that the translation of the term *taḥqīq* as "verification" can be contested. In his *Doubts on Avicenna*, 57–58, fn.49, Ayman Shihadeh has argued that this is a mistranslation (verification should more correctly be rendered as *taḥaqquq*) and that it should be understood as the arrival at knowledge of some truth of reality through critical and investigative means, in contrast with adherence to the truth-claim of an authority (*taqlid*). I agree that there is the risk attached here of restricting it to a narrower idea of verifying of an existing proposition, and hence misleading readers who might not be familiar with the broader range of meanings encompassed by the Arabic term. This not only involves applying critical investigation to a broader question (*mas'ala*—see Jurjānī's definition in his *Ta'rifāt*, 48), but also establishing the truth of the matter through empirical or (in the case of Sufism, experiential) methods. In his *What is Islam?* (338–39) the late Shahab Ahmad briefly touched upon this topic, using the word "Truth-ification" to try to bring out the full meaning of the term into English, and recognized the amalgamation of critical scholarly and Sufi uses of the term, as encompassed in Chittick's definition of *taḥqīq* as aiming at "the discovery of the *ḥaqq* within the seeker's own intelligence". See Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos*, 45. Chittick's Akbarian reading, of course, sees *ḥaqq* both as "truth" as well as a primary name of God. However, since this study already proposes a broad and multifaceted appreciation of *taḥqīq*, I will continue to go along with the common rendering of "verification" or "realization" (in the Sufi context), bearing in mind its limitations. I would like to thank Ayman Shihadeh for drawing my attention to this issue.

But how do intellectual *taḥqīq* and spiritual *taḥqīq* go hand in hand? The unification of these two forms of *taḥqīq* can be seen culminating in the life and career of one of the most colourful figures explored in El-Rouayheb's work, the Kurdish scholar Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1091/1690), designated by the biographer al-Murādī with the lofty title of "the seal of those who attain realisation" (*khātam al-muḥaqqiqīn*).⁵ Building on the work of Alexander Knysh and Basheer Nafi, who respectively highlighted the pro-Ibn 'Arabī and Taymiyyan influence on his works,⁶ El-Rouayheb places al-Kūrānī at the intersection between apparently contradictory trends: fideistic Ḥanbalism, late Ash'arī rationalism, and the mystical monism of the Ibn 'Arabī tradition. According to him, al-Kūrānī's teachings represented a shift from the "non-monistic Sufism" that was prevalent in the Arabic speaking world in the eighth/fifteenth and ninth/sixteenth centuries, which had largely made its peace with Ash'arism, and an emerging movement of "monistic Sufism" opposed to established Ash'arī theology on a number of core doctrines, often siding with their traditionalist Ḥanbalī opponents:

Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī played an important role in this process. Widely esteemed not just as a mystic but also as an exoteric scholar and teacher, al-Kūrānī launched a comprehensive assault on established Ash'arī theology—the kind of Ash'arism represented by Ījī, Taftāzānī, Jurjānī, Sanūsī, and Dawānī—and advocated a return to the more traditionalist Ash'arism of the *Ibāna*. He went out of his way to find and read the works of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and on a number of occasions defended them from the charge of anthropomorphism. He also cultivated close personal ties with prominent Ḥanbalī scholars in his own

5 Al-Murādī, *Silk al-durar*, 5.

6 Knysh, "An apologist for Ibn 'Arabī"; Nafi, "Tasawwuf and Reform". Nafi (338) analysed al-Kūrānī's treatise on *kasb* (explored later below) as well as a number of other of al-Kūrānī's writings, concluding that his advocacy of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings was based on a selective reading which, in his words: "does not search for the inner contradictions of Ibn 'Arabī's system of thought, as a typical Salafī 'ālim might be expected to do, nor does it seek to highlight the superiority of the esoteric-mystical understanding of scripture: it is rather a conciliatory, syncretic reading." Nafi's description of al-Kūrānī as a reformist Sufi is echoed in Azyumardi Azra's *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia*, a study of the impact of networks of Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian 'ulamā' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Through an analysis of *ḥadīth* chains of transmission, Azra demonstrates not only the growing importance of *ḥadīth* study among reformist Sufi scholars such as al-Kūrānī, but also the central role of *ḥadīth* chains going through Ibn 'Arabī.

time, for example, asking the leading Damascene Ḥanbalī of his day, ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Ba‘lī, for an exposition of the Ḥanbalī creed.⁷

We cannot discount the significance of this development, as strange as it might be given the vast gap today between supporters of Ibn Taymiyya on the one hand, and advocates of Akbarian Sufism on the other. According to El-Rouayheb, the continuing impact of al-Kūrānī can be seen in leading reformist figures over the succeeding centuries, directly influencing the rise of a reformist trend that would increasingly distance itself from established Ash‘arism and align itself more with a “neo-Ḥanbalī” outlook, leading up to the rise of Salafism in its modern form.⁸

While El-Rouayheb has provided a concise summary of this development, there are still significant questions that remain unanswered. Why did a “monistic Sufi” like al-Kūrānī try to align himself with a figure such as Ibn Taymiyya, rather than a more simple form of Ḥanbalī fideism? At the same time, why did he try to fit his approach also—as we will see—within a modified form of Ash‘arism?

The aim of the following discussion is to explore this trend—which El-Rouayheb characterised as “paradoxical”⁹—in more detail, by looking more closely at al-Kūrānī’s intellectual affiliations as presented in his work *al-Amam li-īqāz al-himam*. This work can be classified under the *thabat* or *mashyakha* genre, functioning as a sort of “curriculum vitae”, providing extensive details about the works the author has studied, his teachers, and most crucially, the chains of transmission authoritatively linking him to the original composers of such works.¹⁰ The *Amam* was al-Kūrānī’s most comprehensive *thabat* work and generally provides more details about the author’s views and affiliations than the average work of this type.¹¹

7 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 307.

8 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 310–11.

9 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 311.

10 For a more general discussion on this understudied genre, see Stewart, “Capital, Accumulation, and the Islamic Academic Biography”, 345–62, esp. 345–46. See ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris*, 1:166–67. For some comparisons, see Arberry, “The Repertory of Ibn al-Anṣārī”, 247–63; Vajda, “La transmission de la mašyaḥa”, 55–74; Du Grandlaunay, “La liste d’autorités de Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī”, 81–98. Sabine Schmittke, “Forms and Functions of Licences to Transmit (*ijāzas*) in 18th century Iran”, mentions *thabats/mashyakhas*, *mu’jams* among those works used to document the transmission of learning, and at times, how the description of one’s studies can form part of an *ijāza* (95–96).

11 al-Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris*, 1:166–68. The significance of this work warranted the composition of a gloss on it by al-Kattānī’s colleague, the Meccan-based Indian scholar Aḥmad

In what follows, we will take a close look at the *Amam* in order to establish al-Kūrānī's different intellectual affiliations and his broader perspective on the relationship between various traditions and disciplines. First, we will explore his discussion of works related to the rational sciences, then proceed to an investigation of the hierarchy of sciences as presented in the overall structure of the work. Finally, the discussion will revisit al-Kūrānī's controversial position on the Ash'arī doctrine of human acquisition of action (*kasb*), seeing to what extent a more nuanced understanding of his theological method guided by a close reading of the *Amam* might help us understand his complicated relationship with Ash'arism.

1 The Rational Sciences and “the Books of Persians” in al-Kūrānī's *Amam*

El-Rouayheb includes al-Kūrānī among a list of predominantly Kurdish scholars involved in the seventeenth century “reinvigoration of the rational sciences” in the Ottoman lands through their introduction of “Books of the Persians” that were generally unknown at the time, such as those of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 918/1502) and 'Iṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarā'īnī (d. 942/1537). According to the biographer al-Muḥibbī (d. 1111/1699), the arrival of Kurdish scholars fleeing the Safavid conquest of Western Azerbaijan from the turn of the seventeenth century CE led to what he called “the opening of the gate of verification (*taḥqīq*)”, which allowed students not only to study and teach these new works, but also approach theological and philosophical subjects in a new critical manner through exposure to Timurid and post-Timurid developments in “dialectics” (*munāẓara*) and “the rules of inquiry” (*adab al-baḥṭh*).¹² The effect this might have had on the development of Ash'arī theology in Iran and Central Asia is unclear, as El-Rouayheb's book is generally concerned with its more general implications on the Ottoman world of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, he points out that even a significant contributor to this development, such as al-Dawānī, was able to depart from the Ash'arī creed on significant issues such as the divine attributes (in this case, arguing that Ash'arī arguments against the Mu'tazila were too inconclusive to deem them heretical).¹³ To a lesser extent, the same could be said of al-Dawānī's slightly older contemporary, al-Jāmī,

b. Abī l-Khayr al-Aḥmadī (d. 1926–27). See also El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 252–53.

12 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 26–29.

13 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 32–34.

whose works also occasionally reflect a tendency to depart from standard Ash'arī doctrine (or at least its standard exposition) when they differed from the mystical philosophy of the Ibn 'Arabī school.¹⁴

Based on al-Kūrānī's *Amam*, El-Rouayheb makes the case that his scholarly formation fits into the general pattern of Kurdish scholars being trained in this new critical approach in their homeland, then bringing this expertise westwards to the lands of the Ottoman empire (in this case, the Ḥijāz).¹⁵ However, a closer look at this book as well as supplementary sources challenges this linear interpretation of al-Kūrānī's intellectual formation.

Alongside the study of core subjects such as Arabic and Islamic law, the first phase of studies undertaken by al-Kūrānī also included the study of introductory texts in the rational sciences (*ma'qūlāt*), such as the *Hidāya* of al-Abharī.¹⁶ The first teacher mentioned by al-Kūrānī, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ḥusaynī (d. 1050/1645), studied in Shīrāzī circles that circulated al-Dawānī's teachings.¹⁷ His mentorship of al-Kūrānī was likely focused on foundational studies. Al-Kūrānī tells us that he studied parts of two classical textbooks by Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390) under al-Ḥusaynī: *Sharḥ al-'Aqida al-Nasafiyya* (theology) and *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-talkhīṣ* (linguistics), with numerous glosses by other leading regional scholars and Shīrāzī transmitters of al-Dawānī's works.¹⁸ The fact that he hardly mentions this earlier figure elsewhere in the *Amam*, not least under the section on his study of al-Dawānī's works, tells us that his studies under al-Ḥusaynī were only preliminary and came to an abrupt end with the death of this teacher in 1050/1640. At this stage, al-Kūrānī was around 25 years old.

Following al-Ḥusaynī's death, al-Kūrānī came under the supervision of a new teacher at Shahrazūr, Sayyid Muḥammad Sharīf b. Yūsuf al-Ṣiddīqī

14 See especially his well-known *al-Durra al-fākhira*, edited and translated by Nicholas Heer as *The Precious Pearl*, 1979.

15 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 51 (see 52 for a general diagram representing al-Kūrānī's main intellectual lineages connecting him to al-Dawānī).

16 al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*.

17 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 129. See also al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat*, 2:474, where the information is likely taken from the former source. The biographies mention that al-Ḥusaynī studied the following texts of al-Dawānī: *Risāla fi ithbāt al-wujūd*, *Sharḥ ḥikmat al-'ayn*, *Sharḥ al-'Aḍḍ li-mukhtaṣar Ibn Ḥājib*, but al-Kūrānī was only to study these texts later on with other scholars such as al-Qushāshī. Al-Kūrānī also tells us that he studied under al-Ḥusaynī's father, Abū Bakr al-Muṣannif (d. 1014/1605–6), who was considered a leading Shāfi'ī scholar of the region.

18 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 101–2.

al-Kūrānī (d. 1078/1667).¹⁹ Al-Kūrānī's tutorship under this teacher—whom he referred to as “*ustādhī al-muḥaqqiq*”²⁰—was to leave a strong imprint upon him for the rest of his life, although it seems more likely that what he meant here by *taḥqīq* was intellectual verification rather than spiritual realisation. Al-'Ayyāshī describes him as “the shaykh that he (al-Kūrānī) referred to often and depended upon in the exoteric sciences (‘*ulūm al-zāhir*’)” and under whom “he studied many books in the rational sciences” (‘*ulūm al-'aqliyya*’).²¹ Al-Ṣiddīqī's first task as a teacher was to aid his student in continuing his uncompleted studies of al-Taftāzānī's abovementioned *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-talkhīṣ* (completed in 1050/1641).²² Under al-Ṣiddīqī, al-Kūrānī was introduced to advanced studies in a wider range of topics and works: Quran commentary (the famous commentary of al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*),²³ logic (glosses by al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī on Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's commentaries on al-Urmawī's *Maṭālī' al-anwār* and al-Kātibī's *al-Risāla al-shamsiyya*),²⁴ *kalām* (al-Jurjānī's commentary on the *Mawāqif* of al-Ījī and al-Dawānī's commentary on al-Ījī's *Risāla fī l-'aqā'id*)²⁵ and philosophy (al-Jurjānī's gloss on Shams al-Dīn al-Bukhārī's commentary on al-Kātibī's *Ḥikmat al-'ayn*, al-Dawānī's *Risālat al-zawrā*).²⁶

Under al-Ṣiddīqī, there is a clear shift of focus towards the works of al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī and al-Dawānī, and a move away from the writings of al-Taftāzānī, which al-Kūrānī would not revisit until later on in his intellectual career. Thus, his curriculum of study for al-Kūrānī was aimed towards mastery of the legacy of these two masters, in particular, al-Taftāzānī's rival al-Jurjānī. What these two figures have in common (and as opposed to al-Taftāzānī) is sympathy towards the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, and it comes as no surprise that even before embarking for Mecca, al-Kūrānī had already studied al-Dawānī's famous defence of the Akbarian teaching on the Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), *Risāla fī ithbāt al-wujūd*.²⁷ Without more detailed studies of the competing streams

19 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 128–29; al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat*, 4 280–81 (again, probably relying on the former as a primary source).

20 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 3.

21 al-'Ayyāshī, *Ithāf*, 130.

22 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 102.

23 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 73; al-Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 479. Al-Siddīqī was the author of two glosses on this work. At some point before this, al-Kūrānī was able to study some parts of al-Bayḍāwī's commentary under al-Siddīqī's teacher, who was also an expert in Quran commentary and logic.

24 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 102, 128.

25 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 104–5, 128. Parts of this work were studied in Medina around the time of a second visit to Arabia.

26 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 102.

27 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 105.

of curricula and the impact al-Taftāzānī's criticism of the Ibn 'Arabī tradition might have had on the reception of his works (specifically in theological circles), it is hard to draw conclusions about the extent to which the focus away from al-Taftāzānī had more to do with differences in theological viewpoints, or simply reflected the natural progression from introductory textbooks to more advanced works. Considering the abrupt end to al-Kūrānī's study of al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-'aqa'id* after the death of his earlier teacher al-Ṣiddīqī, it seems that the former explanation is at least plausible.

However, what is more surprising is that—contrary to what one would expect, based on El-Rouayheb's thesis that the reinvigoration of the rational sciences was an East-West movement—the intellectual lineages through which al-Ṣiddīqī transmitted to al-Kūrānī most of the abovementioned works almost all go through Syrian, Yemeni and Egyptian teachers, rather than Kurdish-Iranian ones. Al-Ṣiddīqī's chains of transmission for all the works of al-Dawānī go through the Yemeni Shāfi'ī jurist 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥakamī (d. 1041/1632), where the line continues through several scholars of Yemen and the Ḥijāz for over the course of a century before arriving at scholars of Persian-speaking lands:²⁸

'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥakamī (Yemen)²⁹ < 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Fahdī al-Makkī (d. Mecca, 995/1587)³⁰ < Jārullāh Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Fahdī al-Makkī (b. Mecca, 891/1486, d. Mecca, 954/1547)³¹ < Sharaf al-Dīn Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm al-'Alawī al-Zabīdī (b. Zabīd, Yemen, 804/1401–2, d. Zabīd, Yemen, 888/1483–84)³² & Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Hamadhānī al-Shar'abī³³ < 'Afīf al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ījī³⁴ < al-Dawānī

28 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 105.

29 al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat*, 3189.

30 al-Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris*, 734.

31 al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, 3:52; al-Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris*, 296–97, 911–12. His studies brought him to Yemen, Syria, Egypt and Anatolia. See al-Hila, *al-Tārikh wa-l-mu'arrikhīn bi-Makka*, 196.

32 al-Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris*, 1:203, which discusses the transmission of a *thabat* text by al-Dawānī, *Anmūdḥaj al-'ulūm*; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, 2:281 (no. 889). Note that unless the birth/death dates are wrong, al-Zabīdī's death took place before Jārullāh al-Makkī is born, so there is either a missing link, the birth/death dates are wrong, or al-Kattānī has provided us with the wrong name.

33 It is unclear who this figure is, although the *nisba* "al-Shar'abī" indicates that he either was born or settled in the Shar'ab region of Yemen.

34 Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, 16.

In addition to al-Dawānī, El-Rouayheb also names the master of grammar and *ʿilm al-bayān*, ʿIṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarāʾīnī (d. 951/1537) as one of the important authors of “the Books of Persians” that were introduced in the eleventh/seventeenth century.³⁵ Al-Kūrānī also studied the works of this figure, under a Meccan scholar, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ṭabarī al-Makkī (d. 1078/1668),³⁶ whose chain goes back through several other scholars of Mecca until arriving at the first transmitter, Muḥammad Amīn b. Maḥmūd Amīr Bādishāh (d. 987/1579), a Bukhāran Ḥanafī scholar and Sufi who settled in Mecca.³⁷

Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ṭabarī al-Makkī < his father, ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī al-Makkī (b. Mecca 976/1568, d. Mecca, 1033/1625)³⁸ < Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. ʿIṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarāʾīnī al-Makkī³⁹ < Muḥammad Amīn b. Maḥmūd Amīr Bādishāh al-Bukhārī (d. 987/1579)⁴⁰ < ʿIṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarāʾīnī

In this second case, one could add that all the scholars involved in this chain have Iranian or Central Asian origins. What is common to both chains of transmission is the important role of Mecca as a central node, no doubt due to its importance as a pilgrimage site, but also an intellectual centre. This challenges El-Rouayheb’s account of transmission taking place from East to West during the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries. If we take al-Kūrānī’s given intellectual lineages here at face value, it appears that there was already a transmission of new *ʿaqlīyyāt* works by figures such as al-Dawānī into the Arabic-speaking lands of the Ottoman Empire a century earlier than suggested. In addition, it seems that these lineages follow a similar pattern to that of the earlier transmission of works by figures such as al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (and possibly, al-Taftāzānī) via intellectual networks of mainly Shāfiʿī scholars in Egypt, Yemen and the Ḥijāz.⁴¹

Without a more in-depth investigation of the intellectual links between Iran, Central Asia and the Ḥijāz in this period, it is hard to establish to what extent al-Kūrānī’s chains of transmission represented a more general trend. What we

35 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 31–32.

36 al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat*, 2:195–96.

37 Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʿallifīn*, 3:148; al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām*, 6:41.

38 al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat*, 1:371–72.

39 I have not found any information on this figure, although it is clear that he was the grandson of ʿIṣām al-Dīn. It is unclear whether he was born or settled in Mecca.

40 Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʿallifīn*, 3:148.

41 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 103–4.

can establish from this information is that al-Kūrānī's studies under al-Ṣiddīqī were not only a conduit to gaining access to "the Books of the Persians", but also a wider intellectual network of scholars that had already been circulating this body of knowledge in the Ḥijāz. Thus, it is unsurprising that he then felt motivated to pursue further studies abroad, especially in two areas of knowledge he did not feel he had access to: *ḥadīth* and Sufism. As he told his student al-'Ayyāshī:

I did not think there was anyone left on the face of the Earth who still said "it was narrated to me" (*ḥaddathanā*) and "it was reported to me" (*akhbaranā*) until I came to the Arab lands of Syria, Egypt and the Ḥijāz. As for Sufism, similarly, I did not think anyone was still circulating it in reading or writing, other than what could be found in notebooks, nor bothered to act upon it, other than hermits on mountain peaks.⁴²

Around 1055/1645, following the death of his father, al-Kūrānī set off on a pilgrimage to Mecca together with his teacher al-Ṣiddīqī and accompanied by his brother 'Abd al-Raḥmān. His brother fell ill and al-Kūrānī was forced to stay in Baghdad for around two years. At Baghdad, he began to explore Sufi writings in the vicinity of the tomb of the famous Sufi of Baghdad, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. After a vision of the saint telling him to go West to seek his guide, al-Kūrānī moved to Damascus, where he lived for four years, a period in which he began to delve more seriously into the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī.⁴³ Here he also studied under the famous *ḥadīth* master and historian Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651)⁴⁴ and came into contact with the Ḥanbalī scholar 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Ba'ī (d. 1071/1661), who, significantly, was a teacher of al-Kūrānī's former mentor, al-Ṣiddīqī.⁴⁵ Interestingly, while al-Kūrānī studied books of Ḥanbalī law under al-Ba'ī, he does not seem to have been introduced to Ḥanbalī theology at this stage, not least to the teachings of the Taymiyyan circle that he was to become associated with.⁴⁶

The real turning point in al-Kūrānī's intellectual and spiritual journey took place after he came under the guidance of the Palestinian Sufi Aḥmad al-Qushāshī (d. 1071/1660), who had been settled in Medina for many years.⁴⁷ Al-'Ayyāshī tells us that it was as a devoted reader of Ibn 'Arabī that al-Kūrānī

42 al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 480.

43 al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 480–81.

44 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 3; 129–30.

45 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 103–4. On these two figures, see al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat*, 4:189–200, 2:283–85.

46 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 100.

47 al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat*, 1:343–46.

first encountered the name of his future guide. This took place during a discussion about problems related to certain statements made by Ibn 'Arabī in his *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* about the unity of being and the unity of attributes (*waḥdat al-ṣifāt*). Al-Kūrānī was directed to a treatise by al-Qushāshī which convinced him that the latter was the spiritual pole of his time. Al-Kūrānī first initiated contact with al-Qushāshī through correspondence, and after a brief period in Cairo, arrived in the Ḥijāz where he formally became a disciple of the master. He later married al-Qushāshī's daughter, became his primary disciple, and following the master's death became his successor.⁴⁸

The few studies that have touched upon al-Qushāshī have portrayed him primarily as a Sufi master and advocate of the Akbarian teaching of "the Unity of Being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). El-Rouayheb's recent survey is not an exception, presenting al-Qushāshī mainly in the context of the spread of monistic Sufism.⁴⁹ This is unsurprising if we consider the list of works attributed to al-Qushāshī, which are primarily written for Sufi audiences.⁵⁰ Al-Kūrānī's writings, on the other hand, often engaged with subjects such as law and rhetoric.⁵¹ The difference was also a matter of method and style. Al-'Ayyāshī tells us that al-Qushāshī's writings on the controversial issue of the Ash'arī doctrine of human acquisition of action (*kasb*) were less accessible when compared to al-Kūrānī's, as the former hardly employed the method of *kalām* theologians when presenting arguments.

Mullā Ibrāhīm [al-Kūrānī]'s writings on this issue were easier to understand than the writings of our Shaykh al-Ṣafī [al-Qushāshī], as the predominant concern of the latter was spiritual authenticity (*ṣiḥḥat al-kashf*), and therefore he relied a lot on this and on the statements of gnostics such as Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī and his like, and also on the Qur'ān and the Sunna, rarely turning to the proofs of the *kalām* theologians. Therefore his discourse was difficult for many of the formal scholars (*al-mutarassima*) who were not at his level in spiritual unveiling and gnosis concerning the essential truths of the divine names and attributes (*ma'ānī l-asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt*).

As for our shaykh Mullā Ibrāhīm, due to the strength of his insight in the rational sciences (*ma'qūlāt*), the breadth of his learning in the positions of the *kalām* theologians and the distinction of the false from

48 al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 481–85.

49 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 251, 260–61.

50 See the short lists in *GAL*, 2:453 (new English translation) and al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat*, 1:345. Al-Muḥibbī tells us that there are over 50 known works attributed to him.

51 For short lists, see al-Murādi, *Silk al-durar*, 5; El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 252.

the sound (from among these position), he was able to present the issue through the matrix of problems within the science of *kalām* theology, making arguments using its form of proofs, tracing them back to the sound positions of the Ahl al-Sunna and drawing on the proofs they used against the Qadariyya and the Jabriyya.⁵²

Could we deduce from this that al-Qushāshī was simply unfamiliar with the methods of the rational sciences? It is tempting to draw this conclusion also due to his close association with Ḥanbalism, with its historical antipathy towards *kalām* theology and Ashʿarism.⁵³ However, a closer look at al-Kūrānī's *Amam* refutes this view and further reinforces the contention made earlier, that he did not simply bring new knowledge from Iran and Central Asia to Ottoman Arab lands, but rather acquired a large portion of it in the heart of Arabia itself.

Under al-Qushāshī, al-Kūrānī resumed the study of post-classical works in the rational sciences that he had initially started under his former teacher al-Ṣiddiqī, such as the commentary on the *Shamsiyya* by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Taḥṭānī (d. 766/1365) and the *Mawāqif* of al-Ījī.⁵⁴ But more importantly for our discussion, al-Qushāshī's mentoring included focused study of the "Books of the Persians" by the abovementioned Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī and ʿIṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarāʾīnī, with the following lineages that went through al-Qushāshī's own Sufi master, the Egyptian Abū l-Mawāhib Aḥmad al-Shinnāwī (d. 1028/1619).

- a) Al-Qushāshī < al-Shinnāwī < ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-Qādir Ibn al-Fahd al-Makkī < Jārullāh b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Ibn al-Fahd al-Makkī < Sharaf al-Dīn al-ʿAlawī al-Zabīdī & Shihāb al-Dīn al-Hamadhānī < ʿAfif al-Dīn al-Ījī < al-Dawānī⁵⁵
- b) Al-Qushāshī < al-Shinnāwī < al-Sayyid al-Ghaḍanfar al-Gujarātī al-Nahrawālī al-Madanī⁵⁶ < Mullā Sayyid Muḥammad Mīr Kīlān b. Maḥmūd al-Balkhī⁵⁷ < ʿIṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarāʾīnī⁵⁸

52 al-ʿAyyāshī, *Riḥla*, 530.

53 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 263–64, 287.

54 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 110–11.

55 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 105. See footnotes 29–32 above for more detailed information on the figures in this chain.

56 al-Ḥasanī, *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir*, 5:599.

57 Who we know that was in Mecca around the mid eleventh century A.H., where he initiated the Meccan scholar Aḥmad al-Nakhli into the Naqshbandiyya and Shaṭṭārī paths. See al-Nakhli, *Bughyat al-ṭālibīn*, 73–76.

58 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 109. The full chain is not given here (al-Shinnāwī is missing), but the full chain can be found earlier on the section.

Note that the transmission to al-Dawānī is more or less identical to the one given by al-Kūrānī's former teacher, al-Ṣiddīqī,⁵⁹ converging on the Meccan scholar 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fahdī al-Makkī. More importantly, this once again demonstrates that the works of al-Dawānī and al-Isfarā'īnī were circulating in the Ḥijāz much earlier than the turn of the eleventh/seventeenth century.

What is interesting about these chains is that they reflect the close correspondence between the transmission of the rational sciences and Sufi *ṭarīqa* affiliation. Al-Qushāshī and his master al-Shinnāwī were of course primarily well-known as adherents of the Shaṭṭāriyya, a spiritual tradition which originated in India and had strong links to monistic Sufism.⁶⁰ However, we must not forget that these multiple *ṭarīqa* initiations were common in this period, and al-Qushāshī was initiated into numerous other *ṭarīqas*, such as the Chishtiyya, Firdawsiyya, Kubrawiyya, Qādiriyya, Khalwatiyya and Shādhiliyya.⁶¹ Al-Qushāshī's chain of transmission for the works of al-Dawānī and al-Isfarā'īnī, however, was closely connected with one of the two chains of initiation he received into the lineage of the Naqshbandī path, which went through al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī.

Al-Qushāshī < al-Shinnāwī < al-Sayyid al-Ghaḍanfar al-Nahrawālī al-Madanī < Tāj al-Dīn al-Kāzarūnī < Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṭalūsī < al-Sayyid al-Jurjānī⁶²

The key figure in both transmissions, the Indian scholar al-Ghaḍanfar al-Nahrawālī, was also the crucial link in the transmission from al-Qushāshī to al-Kūrānī of the works of another well-known Naqshbandī Sufi-theologian, al-Jāmī.

Al-Qushāshī < al-Shinnāwī < al-Sayyid al-Ghaḍanfar al-Nahrawālī al-Madanī < al-Jāmī.⁶³

59 See page 378 above.

60 On the Shaṭṭāriyya in the Ḥijāz, see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 249–56.

61 On this, see the brief discussion in Azra, *Origins of Islamic Reformism*, 47–49.

62 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 108–9. Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's connection to the Naqshbandiyya is relatively well-known, but 'Iṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarā'īnī too seems to have been affiliated with this lineage. See al-Nakhli's chain of initiation given in *Bughyat al-ṭālibin*, 73 through Mīr Kilān, where al-Isfarā'īnī is referred to as "Mullā Muḥammad al-'Arab al-Balkhī". Note that, as we have seen earlier, Mīr Kilān was also a transmitter of the scholarly works of al-Isfarā'īnī.

63 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 107–8. Interestingly, this is different to the Naqshbandī initiation chain that went through al-Jāmī (see al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 108).

There is no doubt that al-Kūrānī saw his initiation into the Naqshbandī path and his study of the works of al-Jurjānī, al-Isfarāʾīnī, al-Dawānī and al-Jāmī as closely related. All these works appear closely together with his Naqshbandī chain of initiation in the following order in the *Amam*:⁶⁴

The works of al-Jurjānī
 The works of al-Dawānī
 The works of al-Jāmī
 Naqshbandī chain through al-Jurjānī
 Naqshbandī chain through al-Jāmī
 The works of al-Isfarāʾīnī

Thus, al-Qushāshī's role as a spiritual master to al-Kūrānī went hand in hand with intense mentoring in the rational sciences, including more recent theological and philosophical works produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries CE. What is even more interesting is that this scholarly transmission included works of earlier classical theologians from a wide range of traditions, including the writings of a large number of Ḥanafī-Māturīdī and Ḥanbalī scholars.⁶⁵ However, based on the *Amam*, it seems that priority was given to focused study of a number of key works of the Ashʿarī tradition. Al-Kūrānī directly read with al-Qushāshī parts of the *Irshād* and the *Aqīda Niẓāmiyya* of Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085)⁶⁶ as well as a large number of works by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), including the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, *Fayṣal al-tafrīqa*, parts of *Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*, and *al-Maḍnūn*.⁶⁷ It is less clear to what extent he studied closely with al-Qushāshī the works of more transitional figures to post-classical Ashʿarism such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and al-Bayḍāwī (d. between 699/1299–705/1306), although he received general certification which authorised him to transmit their works.⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, the works of early Ashʿarīs prior to al-Juwaynī are not included. As is well-known, al-Juwaynī's contributions had made earlier

64 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 102–9.

65 For Māturīdism, this included the founder Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), Burhān al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 650/1252), and Abū l-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310). See al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 86, 88, 91. For Ḥanbalism, this included Ibn Baṭṭa (d. 387/997), Ibn ʿAqīl, (d. 513/1119) al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1113), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350). See al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 98–100. It is noteworthy that the *Uṣūl al-Dīn* of Bazdawī (d. 482/1089) and the *Ghunya* of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) are mentioned (pp. 88, 97), indicating closer study.

66 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 112.

67 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 112–13.

68 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 73, 110.

works in the tradition redundant, and largely defines what we have come to identify as classical Ash'arism. Likewise, the case could be made that with the arrival of the new form of systematic *kalām* works developed by al-Ījī, the works by earlier figures such as al-Rāzī and al-Bayḍāwī were largely redundant except for the purposes of the most advanced forms of research.⁶⁹

It is, therefore, unsurprising that the works of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī himself were not directly studied or transmitted to al-Kūrānī, and it seems most likely that the frequent references he makes to a work such as the *Ibāna* were taken second-hand from later works.⁷⁰ However, al-Kūrānī mentions one work by al-Ash'arī he transmitted from al-Qushāshī, a short treatise on faith, *Mas'alat al-īmān*, which, tellingly is placed at the end of the *Amam*'s section on Ḥanbalī works.⁷¹ The act of situating al-Ash'arī within the Ḥanbalī school fits with what we already know of al-Qushāshī and al-Kūrānī's partiality towards Ḥanbalism.⁷² But why this specific work? It takes the position, following Ibn Ḥanbal, that claiming that faith is created is tantamount to claiming that the Qur'ān is created. There is some evidence that this was a controversy among Sunni traditionalists in the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries, perhaps connected to the more well-known *mas'alat al-lafẓ* (the debate over the createdness of the utterance of the Qur'ān).⁷³ While this might seem like a rather obscure concern, the last few lines of this text indicate why Sufis inclined towards "monism" might take this issue quite seriously.

If it was said: what would prevent you from considering the proclamation of divine oneness (*tawḥīd*) temporal (*muḥdatha*)? Say: because God has proclaimed Himself one in His Book, saying: "I am God, there is no god but Me" (Q. 20:14). If it were permissible to say that the proclamation of God's oneness is temporal, then it would be permissible to say that the statement by which He proclaims His own oneness is temporal, which is unbelief. And if it were impermissible to say that this statement (of God)

69 This is demonstrated by Heidrun Eichner, "Handbooks in the Tradition of Later Eastern Ash'arism", 494–514.

70 See for example, al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 26; al-'Ayyāshī, *Rihla*, 613–14. In the beginning of *Maslak al-sadād*, for example, he tells us that while he read he read parts of the *Ibāna* that were quoted al-Qushāshī's work. See MS Arab 251, Houghton Library, Harvard, fols 1–2.

71 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 101.

72 El-Rouayheb, "Changing Views of Ibn Taymiyya", 300–2; *Islamic Intellectual History*, 273–90.

73 See Abū Ya'lā, *al-Mu'tamad*, 69; Izutsu, *Concept of Belief*, 250–80.

is temporal, and it is known that God has proclaimed Himself one, then it is established that the proclamation of divine oneness is not temporal.⁷⁴

While there is no extra evidence that al-Ash'arī himself held such an interpretation, the idea that the proclamation of divine oneness itself is not temporal (i.e. uncreated) could be read in a way that corresponds to the view often found within Sufism that true recognition (*ma'rifa*) of the divine transcends mundane intellectual knowledge, and can only take place through the divine itself. As Carl Ernst states,

... the Sufi position of faith was consciously opposed to the more intellectualist and literalist views, and it took an approach, closely akin to that of the Ḥanbalīs, based on a deepened experience of the Qur'ānic revelation. This deepening process not only led to an expansion of the understanding of faith, but also led to an elaboration of the higher forms of faith, which assumed separate positions (*yaqīn*, *ma'rifa*). By thus making faith at once more important and less ultimate than it was usually considered, the Sufis made the concept of faith much more flexible and all-inclusive. It can mean anything from blind imitative faith (*īmān al-muqallid*) to the general form of human participation in divine reality.⁷⁵

2 The Hierarchy of the Sciences and the Structure al-Kūrānī's *Amam*

The two examples of a) the strategic positioning of the Naqshbandī *khirqā* lineage amidst the scholar-theologian affiliates of the lineage and b) al-Ash'arī's text at the transition point between the transmitted sciences (*al-'ulūm al-naqlīyya*) and rational sciences (*al-'ulūm al-'aqlīyya*) indicate that the arrangement of the *Amam* is far from random. Therefore, we will now turn to the structure of the *Amam* as a way to yield further clues about al-Kūrānī's grand vision of the relationship between the different intellectual traditions he was affiliated with.

The work begins by sticking to the typical mould of a work in the *thabat* genre, its first part essentially a long list of different *ḥadīth* collections and their chains of transmission. As we proceed further on in the list we find not only well known collections but also those produced mainly with the aim of promoting Sunni traditionalism such as a creed of al-Shāfi'ī,⁷⁶ *Kitāb al-Sharī'a*

74 al-Ash'arī, *Risāla fī l-īmān*, 15–16.

75 Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 60–61.

76 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 19.

of Abū Bakr al-Ājurī (d. 360/970) and *Kitāb al-Sunna* of al-Lālakāī (d. 418/1027–28).⁷⁷ The final text mentioned at the end of this series is the *Anwār al-tanzīl* of al-Bayḍāwī, not the only Qur'ān commentary al-Kūrānī studied, but indisputably the most widely used advanced work in the genre for his time.⁷⁸

The second section of the *Amam* is concerned with the schools of law and the associated theological traditions. Al-Kūrānī lists works of the different schools of law he studied under different teachers, starting with the Shāfi'ī tradition both he and his master adhered to (the transmission of al-Qushāshī's own works comes at the end of this list). This is followed respectively by those of the Ḥanafī and Mālikī traditions before arriving at the lists of works from the Ḥanbalī school, which, as seen earlier, culminated in the text on faith by al-Ash'arī, a choice which reflects al-Kūrānī's association of this figure with Ḥanbalism.

The following section, consisting of texts in the rational sciences, begins with al-Taftāzānī, who, if we remember, was important at the foundational level of al-Kūrānī's studies. Most of the works listed here are related to the field of logic and rhetoric. This is followed by the works of the triad of Naqshbandī sages (al-Jurjānī–al-Dawānī–al-Jāmī) including the lineages of initiation into the Sufi path.⁷⁹ This is followed by 'Iṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarā'īnī, whose position at this juncture seems to signify the role of logic and rhetoric as necessary gateways for the study of more advanced texts in the rational sciences. Unsurprisingly then, the lineage for al-Isfarā'īnī's works are followed by those of three core figures of Ash'arism: al-Rāzī, al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī. With al-Ghazālī, we move into the final section, a list of transmitted Sufi works starting from the well-known practical manuals of 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) and Khwāja Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), then leading higher up through the writings of the Akbarī tradition up to the works of Ibn 'Arabī himself.

The conclusion we can draw from the discussion so far is that for al-Kūrānī and his teacher al-Qushāshī, Ash'arī theology and the rational sciences in general were studied and understood largely mediated through two lenses: that of Sufism (in particular monist Akbarī Sufism) and an interpretation of intellectual history largely founded in Sunni traditionalism and ecumenicism. This was defined primarily, but not exclusively, by the positions of the *Aṣḥāb al-hadīth*, while at the same time recognising the validity of other Sunni schools of law

77 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 51.

78 al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 73.

79 It is significant that while al-Kūrānī and al-Qushāshī were well-known as Shāṭṭārī Sufis, and were initiated into other lineages, the Naqshbandī path is the only one listed in the whole work.

and theology. Thus, while the traditionalist or “fideist” position in theology was legitimised and affirmed as the best approach, recognition is given to the important role of the rational sciences, especially to Ash‘arī theology, as part of a process leading up to the higher metaphysics of the Akbarī tradition. It would not be wrong to say that such an approach largely saw the rational sciences as a means to an end, especially since this did not conflict with the views of theologians held up most highly by al-Kūrānī: al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī, al-Jurjānī, al-Jāmī and al-Dawānī. Al-Kūrānī himself indicates this when he describes the sections of al-Jurjānī’s commentary on the *Mawāqif* of al-Ījī that were selected for his student al-‘Ayyāshī to study as “a ladder to the understanding of the science of realities” (*sullaman ilā fahm ‘ilm al-ḥaqā’iq*).⁸⁰

So far, we have mainly spoken about what the *Amam* tells us explicitly, but it is equally important to understand what the text omits or obscures deliberately. As pointed out earlier, certain omissions are simply due to the sheer fact of redundancy, as in the case of any early Ash‘arī works preceding the classical tomes of al-Juwaynī. More surprising is the omission—with the exception of the Naqshbandī lineage—of Sufi lineages and works associated with them, especially the Shaṭṭārī path which al-Qushāshī and al-Kūrānī are more well-known for. The Shaṭṭārīs transmitted a work called *al-Jawāhir al-khams*, even translating it into Arabic, and we know that al-Kūrānī commented on another text associated with this path, the *Tuḥfat al-mursala* of Faḍlullāh al-Burhānpurī (d. 1029/1620), which is also nowhere mentioned in the text. Finally, one more glaring omission is the Ishrāqī tradition.⁸¹

It is not entirely clear why these works are not mentioned in the *Amam*. Tentatively, the most likely explanation we can put forward is that as a *thabat* work, the *Amam* was tailored for a broader audience which included more conservative readers who might have been scandalised by the inclusion of controversial Sufi and philosophical works. This might seem surprising considering the heavy presence of Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers, but we must bear in mind the Shaykh al-Akbar’s respectability within *ḥadīth* circles and the general normativity of the Akbarian tradition within the Ottoman period. In fact, one of the key agendas of al-Kūrānī—not only in this work, but also in many of his other writings—was to promote a version of Akbarī Sufism that appealed to a broader audience of traditionalists, including those who would have been sympathetic to the Ḥanbalī revivalism of Ibn Taymiyya.

80 al-‘Ayyāshī, *Ithāf*, 123; *idem*, *Riḥla*, 1:497.

81 We know from al-‘Ayyāshī that al-Kūrānī taught the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* of Yahyā al-Suhrawardī (al-‘Ayyāshī, *al-Riḥla*, 1:494).

3 Applied *taḥqīq*: the *kasb* Controversy Revisited

With a clearer picture of al-Kūrānī's multiple affiliations in mind, we can briefly return again to the most extensively discussed theological controversy that he was involved with. Through a concise analysis of al-Kūrānī's most extensive work on the issue, *Maslak al-sadād fī aḥkām al-khalq al-'ibād*, El-Rouayheb has already summarised the core aspects of this debate, on the issue of the effective power (*ta'thīr*) of human power or capacity to act.⁸² However, two lingering questions remain:

- a) Why did al-Kūrānī take an unusual stance against the established Ash'arī position, i.e. that the effect of a human action was through the power of God, and not through an independent human power?
- b) Why did he frame it within the context of a classical Ash'arī revival? After all, he was likely familiar enough with alternate positions within the Ḥanafī or Ḥanbalī tradition that could have been adopted.

Building on what has been discussed thus far, a number of possible explanations can be suggested. Firstly, one crucial missing element from El-Rouayheb's recent account is the direct influence of al-Kūrānī's master al-Qushāshī on this matter, arising out of the relative obscurity of al-Qushāshī and his writings, and the tendency to view their master-disciple relationship in Sufi terms only. As we have seen, al-Qushāshī's role extended beyond that of the spiritual guide, and a significantly large portion of al-Kūrānī's mastery in the rational sciences took place under his supervision. With this in mind, it is not surprising when we discover that the controversy over *kasb* was originally sparked by al-Qushāshī's publication of three works on the matter.⁸³ Al-'Ayyāshī tells us that these works led to severe criticism from Ash'arī dogmatists who were angry with the way al-Qushāshī's position on *kasb* clashed with the one given in the works of al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490). We know from the recent studies of El-Rouayheb and Spevack that this was a crucial time for the spread of the Sanūsian corpus, which were just beginning to be transmitted further Eastwards around the time of al-Qushāshī's composition of his three works.⁸⁴

Al-Qushāshī had a dream early on in his career, in which the master met Ibn 'Arabī, was clothed by him, and was then given the hand of the latter's sister in marriage. Discussing this dream many years later, we are told by al-'Ayyāshī

82 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 294–305.

83 al-'Ayyāshī, *al-Riḥla*, 1:598.

84 El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 131–47. Spevack, "Egypt and the Later Ash'arite School", 538–40.

that this signified not only a deep genuine spiritual connection to the Shaykh al-Akbar but also his appointment as the age's defender of his teachings.

As for being clothed by him (i.e. Ibn 'Arabī), this is an allusion to his being raised to his (Ibn 'Arabī's) station and displaying his states when commenting on the divine realities, as we do not see or hear any gnostic in our time other than our *shaykh* who possesses the language of Shaykh Muḥyī l-Dīn (Ibn 'Arabī) on the realities, speaking as if he had his tongue. Thus, he is the reviver (*muḥyī*) of his path, the one who clarifies its difficulties and brings out its hidden aspects, as is clear to anyone who possesses sound spiritual taste. As for being married to his sister, this is an allusion to what the Shaykh has granted to him in terms of speaking on the issue of the oneness of attributes (*waḥdat al-ṣifāt*), as well as writing, commenting and providing proofs for it in a manner not given to anyone before him. Before this, this issue only existed in the statements of earlier gnostics through allusion, signs and interpolation through the discourse of others.⁸⁵

In other words, al-Qushāshī was given the full command of the teaching of the oneness of attributes (*waḥdat al-ṣifāt*), symbolised by marriage, as this was the sister of the teaching of the oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Al-'Ayyāshī tells us that in reality, while affirming that the created power (*qudra*) of willed human acts had an effect (*ta'thīr*), al-Qushāshī considered this attribution of created power to be a metaphorical use of language, rather than a statement of ontological reality. This divine power is one, but possesses two aspects (*nisbatayn*), an aspect relevant to the eternal divine essence, and an aspect relevant to the locus of divine manifestation, i.e. created causes. The position of Ash'arīs who denied the power of human acts any effective causality, ascribing the effect of a human act to God's power alone, went against any normal understanding of the word "power", which entails effect, and would be tantamount to saying that one aspect of divine power is lacking in effective causality. From this monistic perspective, in which the human self is ultimately part of divine reality, the intellect is limited in its ability to understand the divine realities, and the proper appreciation of the matter requires spiritual unveiling.⁸⁶

Al-Kūrānī followed in his master's footsteps by also composing three works on the topic.⁸⁷ As mentioned earlier, the key difference between al-Qushāshī

85 al-'Ayyāshī, *al-Riḥla*, 590.

86 al-'Ayyāshī, *al-Riḥla*, 1:528–30.

87 al-'Ayyāshī, *al-Riḥla*, 1:525.

and al-Kūrānī was that the former wrote in a more oblique way addressed mainly to Sufis, while the former expressed himself more clearly in the language of scholarship. Based on what we now know about al-Qushāshī's own mastery of the rational sciences, it is quite clear that the difference between him and his disciple was not so much technical ability, but al-Qushāshī's mission to clarify this aspect of Akbarian teachings and defend their integrity, symbolised by his marriage to Ibn 'Arabī's sister. Al-Kūrānī's role, on the other hand, could be seen as the further clarification and elaboration of al-Qushāshī's teachings for a wider audience, using the technical language of the scholars, much in the same way Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī provided a new philosophical template as a vehicle to disseminate the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī.

While al-Qushāshī's discourse was aimed at the higher levels of Akbarī teachings, as opposed to al-Kūrānī's, which tackled the same issue at the level of *kalām* and philosophy, both essentially promoted the same doctrinal position on *kasb*, weaved within a reformist agenda that appealed to their more *ḥadīth*-focused audiences. This was based on an interpretation of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī that was strongly guided by the writings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, which saw the *Ibāna* as his final and most representative work, and situated the founding figure of Ash'arism squarely within the *Aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*/Ḥanbalī camp. In al-Kūrānī's view, the Ash'arī doctrine of *kasb* had been misinterpreted by succeeding theologians until al-Juwaynī decided to return to it in his *al-Risāla al-Nizāmiyya* (going against the position of his earlier writings such as *al-Irshād*). The call for a return to the original teachings of Ash'arism could also have been more motivated by the desire to promote social reform, based on the concern that advocating the lack of any true efficacy (*ta'thūr*) in human power was tantamount to fatalism (*jabr*), and could lead consequently to weakening the moral integrity in the individual and social spheres. In addition, bringing Ash'arīs more in line with Ḥanbalī (and Ḥanafī-Māturīdī) views corresponded with al-Kūrānī's own ecumenical agenda, and a strong conviction in "taking the middle path".⁸⁸ In other words, in this understanding of *taḥqīq* (in both its intellectual and spiritual senses), credal moderation and social reform went hand in hand.

As al-Kūrānī clarifies in his short treatise on the subject, al-Ash'arī's doctrine of *kasb* was formulated as a middle way between the extremes of fatalism (*jabr*) and complete human autonomy of action (*qadar*), and therefore must retain its aim of defending human moral obligation. Otherwise, al-Kūrānī says, echoing Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, "the word *kasb* becomes a signifier without

88 See his statements on this in the short (and possibly first) treatise on *kasb*, *al-Iqnā' al-muḥīt*, in al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 1:606.

a signified" (*ism bi-lā musammā*), i.e. meaningless.⁸⁹ Those whose minds are filled with narrow factionalism (*ta'aṣṣub*) or conform to circulated opinion will react negatively when they hear the word "effect" in relation to human action, imagining it to be similar to the position of the Qadariyya/Mu'tazila.⁹⁰ However, the truth of this matter can only be revealed to one who is given divine unveiling. Thus, knowledge of the unification of actions (*tawhīd al-af'āl*), occurs at three different levels. At the highest level, as mentioned, there is the one who has been given divine unveiling of the reality of the matter.

This issue is only known in the fullest sense of verification (*taḥqīq*) by one who travels along the stations of the wayfarers (*manāzil al-sā'irīn*)⁹¹ to the clear Truth (*al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*), successfully gaining persistence (*baqā'*) from God the most-knowing after complete annihilation (*al-fanā' al-tāmm*). A perception different to his former one is then isolated (*tajarrada*) for him, and he thus knows himself through a truly verified and witnessed knowing (*ma'rifa muḥaqqqa shuhūdīyya*), knowing his Lord in accordance with his rank and the breadth of his sphere (of being), becoming one of those firmly rooted in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūn fī l-'ilm*) through the path of divine grace, not that of the intellectual path.⁹²

After him is "the person of faith" (*ṣāhib al-īmān*) who believes in the proofs of the Divine law, and, unshaken by the doubts of *kalām* works, looks to God for guidance, as well as the writings of "the *imāms* of true divine unveiling" (*a'immat al-kashf al-ṣaḥīḥ*)—no doubt a reference to the writings of Sufis such as Ibn 'Arabī. Such a person affirms all scriptural statements regarding the divine realities, even though in their apparent senses they might contradict themselves. In other words, he practices the way of the *Ahl al-sunna*, as articulated by al-Ash'arī in his final work, the *Ibāna*.⁹³ The third, and lowest type of knower, is the man of intellectual understanding (*ṣāhib al-naẓar al-fikrī*), who sees things from behind the wall of thinking. Unlike the man of faith, who builds the foundation of his knowledge on the unification of divine attributes and is unafraid to affirm them in spite of apparent contradictions, the man of thought does not manage to do so because he is concerned that doing

89 For a more detailed discussion on this, see Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 39–44.

90 al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 1:606–8.

91 Incidentally the title of the famous Sufi manual of Khwājā Anṣārī, one of the few Sufi works referred to in the transmissions of the *Amam* from al-Qushāshī (al-Kūrānī, *al-Amam*, 113–15).

92 al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 1:607.

93 al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 1:607.

so would lead to the affirmation of doubtful beliefs (*shubuhāt*). Therefore, he resorts to metaphorical interpretation in his understanding of scripture. For al-Kūrānī, this approach is acceptable so long as he does not deny that it is within the realm of possibility for God to create real and effective power in a human agent. One does not have to affirm its reality, but to acknowledge it as a possibility.⁹⁴

It is to this third category that the bulk of al-Kūrānī's discussion seems to be addressed. Drawing on a broad array of scholars from the Ash'arī, Ḥanbalī and Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition, the aim of the text seems to be to break down any dogmatic attachment to the opinion that absolute divine power excludes the ability to work through secondary causes. It is no coincidence that al-Taftāzānī is chosen as the target of al-Kūrānī's treatise: the theologian was well known for his attacks on Ibn 'Arabī.⁹⁵ Drawing on the *taḥqīq* tradition he was familiar with here, al-Kūrānī presents the "rationalist" (*ṣāhib al-naẓar al-fikrī*) with an alternative model of the universe to the rigidly atomistic model of standard Ash'arism which would include secondary causes, a model not presented as an end in itself or a definitive statement of the truth, but as an approximation of the Akbarī viewpoint.⁹⁶ Through a deeper investigation into the philosophical model of cause and effect, the seeker of *taḥqīq* would be able to open his mind to the reality of created being as a locus (*maẓhar*) for the manifestation of the divine names and attributes.⁹⁷

Essentially, it could be said that while al-Qushāshī was speaking at the level of the oneness of attributes (*tawḥīd al-ṣifāt*), his student's discourse was aimed at the lower but more general level of oneness of actions (*tawḥīd al-af'āl*). Whereas al-Qushāshī's discourse was directed at those who were on the Sufi path, and, perhaps, also those "simple believers" who accepted scripture without question, al-Kūrānī's mode of teaching took into account those who walked the more difficult intellectual path, using intellectual *taḥqīq* as a means to spiritual *taḥqīq*. In doing this, both saw themselves not as outsiders to Ash'arism, but as advocates of what they perceived to be the original teachings of the Ash'arī school.

94 al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 1:608.

95 Al-Kūrānī's perception of al-Taftāzānī as a *mutakallim* with no understanding of the deeper realities is reinforced in a report he recounts to al-'Ayyāshī, in which al-Jurjānī's piety and spiritual insight is contrasted to al-Taftāzānī's attachment to worldly glory (al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 1: 497–98).

96 al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 612–20.

97 It should be noted here that it was with this purpose in mind that al-Kūrānī taught al-Suhrawardī's *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (al-'Ayyāshī, *Riḥla*, 607).

What this case study tells us is that it is impossible to look at late post-classical Ash'arism without taking into account the multiple levels of discourse involved, especially between the popular level of creeds and dogmatics and the higher level of philosophical theology which included the insights of mystical theosophy. Although it is debatable to what degree it can be designated as "Ash'arism" in the sense that the term is generally understood, al-Qushāshī and al-Kūrānī's interesting syncretic approach aimed at re-articulating the theological school in order to bridge opposing Sunni traditions at the popular level of theological discourse in the name of an ecumenical "middle path". On the other hand, at the level of higher intellectual discourse, al-Qushāshī's teaching unveiled a new dimension of the teachings of the Akbarī tradition, which was then fleshed out and articulated in a more approachable language by his student al-Kūrānī. Ultimately, as in the case of their predecessors, the Naqshbandī sages al-Jāmī and al-Dawānī, the primary aim here was the reconciliation of the two poles of intellectual and spiritual *tahqīq*.

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The *Mawāqif* of ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī in India

Asad Q. Ahmed

For about two hundred years after the death of ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355–56), the text of his monumental *Kitāb al-Mawāqif fī ‘ilm al-kalām* had a very limited readership in Muslim South Asia. This state of affairs continued to some degree into part of the late tenth/sixteenth century despite—as I have explained elsewhere¹—the enormous and quick influence the commentaries of al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 907/1501) on various other texts enjoyed in this region. This is rather surprising, as the former had penned a commentary that ultimately came to define the interpretive lens of the tradition of the *Mawāqif* and the latter had written a gloss on this same commentary, in addition to a first order commentary.² Indeed the general output of al-Jurjānī and al-Dawānī had already captured the attention of South Asian scholars within a hundred years of al-Dawānī’s death.³

The first two cases of engagement with the *Mawāqif* from scholars associated with the intellectual lineage of South Asia occur sometime in the second half of the tenth/sixteenth century. One of these was a gloss on al-Jurjānī’s commentary on the *Mawāqif* by Wajīh al-Dīn b. Naṣrallāh al-Gujarātī (d. 998/1590), who was a student of ‘Imād al-Dīn al-Ṭārimī (d. 941/1534); the latter was himself a student of al-Dawānī. This gloss seems to have had practically no traction in the Indian milieu.⁴ The second interpretive lens came in the form of a supergloss by Mirzā Jān al-Shīrāzī/al-Bāghnawī (d. 994 or 995/1586

1 Ahmed, “Logic”.

2 Wisnovsky, “Nature”, 177–78. See also Dhanani, “*Al-Mawāqif*”, for an overview of the work and an investigation of some representative topics.

3 The influence of al-Dawānī, for example, reached India via the scholarly networks that centered on Faṭḥallāh al-Shīrāzī (d. 997/1589). The latter was a student of Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Dashtakī (d. 949/1542) and enjoyed the patronage of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 963/1556–1014/1605). Al-Dawānī’s texts may also have been taught earlier by some of his students who had settled in India. See Ahmed, “Logic”, 228–29.

4 A number of Wajīh al-Dīn’s students are mentioned in the sources, many associated with Gujarāt and quite a few who were Shī‘ī. I have not been able to find reference to any in this intellectual lineage who wrote on the *Mawāqif*. The entry in al-Lakhnawī’s *Nuzha* for Khushḥāl b. Qāsim b. Miskīn (fl. 10th–11th/16th–17th c.) mentions that Wajīh al-Dīn was also a teacher of Mirzā Jān al-Shīrāzī (on whom see below); but this claim seems unsubstantiated and appears unlikely given that both scholars belonged to the same generation and died within four years of each other. Al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 5: 155–56.

or 1587)—again, an intellectual grandchild of al-Dawānī—on the gloss of Qāḍī Shāh al-Samarqandī on the commentary of al-Jurjānī. This gloss also seems to have had no direct impact on the absorption of the *Mawāqif* into South Asia.⁵ Like the work of Wajīh al-Dīn, it garnered no glosses itself and is only infrequently mentioned in the later South Asian glosses on the text before the adoption of the lithograph and the publications of gloss *majmū'āt*.⁶ Yet Mīrzā Jān may well have had something to do with the sudden and immense presence of the text in the next century.

For one, the earliest notable flurry of South Asian scholars who produced glosses on al-Jurjānī's commentary belonged in the lineage of Mīrzā Jān, passing through the common link 'Abd al-Salām al-Dīwī of Awadh (d. 1040/1630), first to 'Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Siyālkūtī (d. 1067/1656) and alternatively, one generation later, to the fountainhead of the famous Farangī Maḥallī tradition, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Sihālāwī (d. 1102/1691).⁷ Both these scholars wrote glosses on al-Jurjānī's commentary, though not on the gloss of Mīrzā Jān.⁸ Quṭb al-Dīn al-Sihālāwī's student, Amānallāh al-Banārasī (d. 1132 or 1133/1720 or 1721), also

5 See Wisnovsky, "Nature", 177. The sources mention but a couple of Indian scholars of the tenth/sixteenth century who are said to have taught or debated aspects of the *Mawāqif*; very likely via the commentary of al-Jurjānī. These include al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Samī' al-Ḥanafī (fl. 10th/16th c.) and Abū l-Qāsim 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Gujarātī, the grand vizier of Gujarāt, known by the title of Āṣaf Khān (fl. 10th/16th c.). This latter scholar is reported to have studied under Abū l-Faḍl al-Astarābādī, who studied under al-Dawānī. Āṣaf Khān was sent to Mecca in 942/1535 by the emperor Humāyūn (d. 963/1556); during his long stay, he debated the finer points of the *Mawāqif* via its commentaries and glosses with the scholars in the region. Al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 4:160, 165ff.; Ahmed, "Logic", 228. One other tenth/sixteenth century scholar, Yūnus b. Abī Yūnus al-Samarqandī al-Sindhī (d. 951/1544), is reported to have taught al-Jurjānī's commentary on the *Mawāqif*. The sources also mention some additional scholars from Gujarāt who taught, studied, and wrote on the *Mawāqif*. These include an eleventh/seventeenth century scholar Aḥmad b. Sulaymān al-Gujarātī (d. 1092/1681), who studied al-Jurjānī's commentary on the *Mawāqif*; and Hibatallāh b. 'Aṭa'allāh al-Shīrāzī al-Gujarātī (d. late 9th–early 10th/late 15th–early 16th c.), who is reported to have written a gloss on al-Jurjānī's commentary on the *Mawāqif*. These few early scholars from Gujarāt who studied and wrote on the *Mawāqif* via the lens of al-Jurjānī generally do not fit into the patterns of scholarly networks that will emerge in the course of this article. Yet they demonstrate the importance of Gujarāt as an intellectual hub into the eleventh/seventeenth century, one that needs further scholarly exploration. See al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 4:346, 355, 5:44; Ahmed, "Logic", 228.

6 See, e.g., the margins of the lithograph of the gloss of Muḥammad Faḍl-i Ḥaqq Rāmpūrī (d. 1358/1940) on Mīr Zāhid al-Harawī (d. 1101/1689) on al-Jurjānī on the *Mawāqif*, printed by al-Maṭba' al-Aḥmadī of Rāmpūr (no date), *passim*. See al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 8:383–84; Wisnovsky, "Nature", 177.

7 On the Farangī Maḥall tradition, see Robinson, *The 'Ulama of Farangi Mahall*, and Malik, *Islamische Gelehrtenkultur*.

8 Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 20–24.

wrote a gloss on al-Jurjānī's commentary.⁹ This eleventh/seventeenth century flowering of engagement is symptomatic of more global trends in the study of the *Mawāqif* that emerged with the publication of the gloss of Mīr Zāhid al-Harawī (d. 1101/1689) on al-Jurjānī's commentary; and this scholar was himself a student of Mullā Muḥammad Yūsuf, who, in turn, had studied with Mīrzā Jān al-Shīrāzī.¹⁰ It is this text—one of the four eleventh/seventeenth century South Asian glosses on al-Jurjānī of which I am aware—that defined the subsequent South Asian interest in the *Mawāqif*.

From this point on, virtually every single work on the *Mawāqif* written in South Asia was a supergloss on Mīr Zāhid al-Harawī. According to my count, the number of glosses on al-Harawī comes to 22; this is out of a total of 29 South Asian engagements with the *Mawāqif* that I have been able to track down. Of the commentaries not mediated by al-Harawī, all were written before al-Harawī's work or were contemporaneous with the author. In other words, after the publication of al-Harawī's gloss, not a single South Asian commentary on the *Mawāqif* appears to have bypassed it.¹¹

So why should this be so? Surely, the other aforementioned glosses on al-Jurjānī, including the complex treatment by al-Siyālkūtī, could have served as the commentarial base texts for the subsequent tradition. In my assessment, the answer to this question may be pursued from two related angles, one that highlights the nature of scholarly networks sustaining a particular set of curricular and reading practices, and the second involving the content of al-Harawī's work and its place within the ambit of philosophical and theological topics that exercised South Asian scholars. As I began this paper with a dive into networks, it may be suitable to continue with that thread before I turn briefly to the question of the contents of al-Harawī's gloss as a way to explain the phenomenon of its monopoly.

9 Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghīr*, 20; Ahmed, "Logic", 230.

10 Wisnovsky, "Nature", 177; Ahmed, "Logic", 229ff.; Pourjavady, *Philosophy*, 52, n. 33. It should be noted that the more direct and influential line of scholarly networks and texts that travelled between the Subcontinent and Shīrāz passes through Faṭḥallāh al-Shīrāzī (mentioned above). Like Mīrzā Jān al-Shīrāzī, Faṭḥallāh was also trained by Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd, who, in turn, was a student of al-Dawānī and Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Dashtakī (mentioned above). Faṭḥallāh al-Shīrāzī taught ‘Abd al-Salām al-Lāhūrī (d. 1037/1628), who precedes the common link to one line of the al-Harawī gloss tradition by one generation. Al-Harawī himself was trained by Mullā Muḥammad Yūsuf, a student of Mīrzā Jān. See the first stemma below.

11 The various authors on the *Mawāqif* tradition in South Asia are indicated in the stemmata provided in this article.

1 Networks

Mīr Zāhid al-Harawī is reported in some sources as a student of Mīrzā Jān al-Shīrāzī. This is highly unlikely, if not impossible, given that more than a century passed between their deaths. What is more likely is that he was trained by a student of Mīrzā Jān, the aforementioned Mullā Muḥammad Yūsuf, who is mentioned in one instance as a peer of Khushhāl b. Qāsim (another student of Mīrzā Jān mentioned above).¹² Mīrzā Jān was himself trained by two scholars who, in turn, had been trained by al-Dawānī or by one of his students. These are Wajīh al-Dīn b. Naṣrallāh al-Gujarātī (mentioned above),¹³ a student of ‘Imād al-Dīn al-Ṭarīmī, and Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd (both mentioned above). In addition to al-Dawānī, the latter was trained by Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Dashtakī. Jamāl al-Dīn and al-Dashtakī both also trained the celebrated Faṭḥallāh al-Shīrāzī, who, in turn, is reported to have popularized in India the works of al-Dawānī and Mīrzā Jān.¹⁴

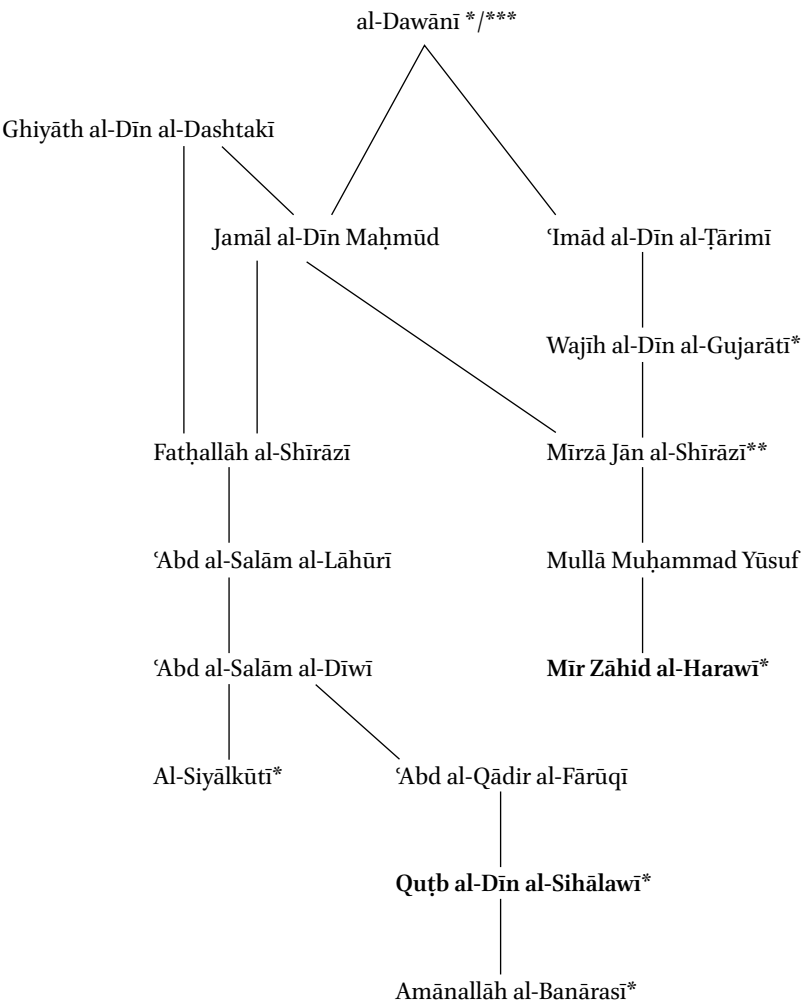
This means that the intellectual heritage of glossing al-Jurjānī that had been sustained by Mīrzā Jān had passed directly to al-Harawī; but it was also shared indirectly, via the agency of Faṭḥallāh al-Shīrāzī, by ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Siyālkūtī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Sihālāwī. From this point on, two relatively distinct networks carried on the task of engaging the *Mawāqif*, both via the gloss of al-Harawī. The first saw its emergence with the system of training instituted by Nizām al-Dīn al-Sihālāwī; and the second network flourished in al-Harawī’s own direct legacy, some members of which were absorbed into the tradition of Shāh Walīallāh (d. 1176/1762 c.).¹⁵

12 Ahmed, “Logic”, 228ff., 240, n. 15; Rāhī, *Tadhkira*, 234–35; al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 5 155–56.

13 Al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 4:343.

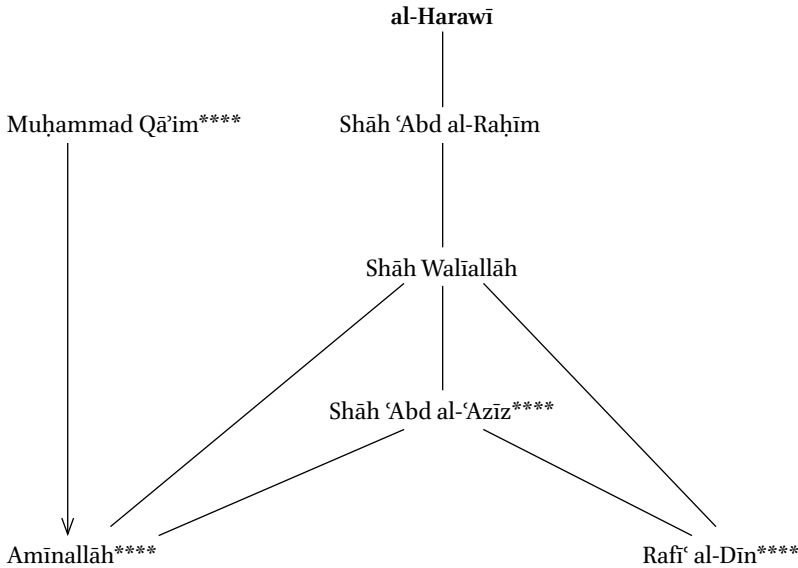
14 See Pourjavady, *Philosophy*, 52, n. 33; al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 4:227; Ahmed, “Logic”, 228ff. See Tree 1 below.

15 See Trees 2 and 3 below. The information for these trees is extracted from the following sources. Aḥmad ‘Alī b. Faṭḥ Muḥammad (d. 1200/1786 c.): al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 6:33; Qāḍī Mūbārak (d. 1162/1749 c.): al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 6:255; Wisnovsky, “Nature”, 177; Muḥammad Barakat b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (late 10th–early 11th/late 16th–early 17th c.): al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 6:299; Bashīr al-Dīn b. Karīm al-Dīn (d. 1296/1879 c.): al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 7:113; ‘Abd al-Aḥlā b. ‘Abd al-‘Alī (d. 1207/1793 c.): al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 7:257ff.; ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. Muṣṭafā (d. 1270/1854 c.): al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 7:358ff.; Walīallāh b. Ḥabīballāh (d. 1270/1854 c.): al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 7:578f.; ‘Abd al-Ḥayy b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm (d. 1304/1887 c.): al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 8:250ff. The following scholars are mentioned in Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 20–27: Amānallāh al-Banārasī (d. 1133/1721 c.); Mullā Ḥasan (d. 1199/1785 c.); Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 27–31: Mīr Zāhid al-Harawī (d. 1101/1690 c.); Muḥammad ‘Azīm b. Kifāyatallāh (fl. 12th/18th c.); Muḥammad Qā’im b. Shāh Amīr; Bashīr al-Dīn b. Karīm al-Dīn (d. 1296/1879 c.); Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 36; Khalīl al-Raḥmān b. Mullā ‘Irfān (fl. 12th/18th c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 40; Zuhūrallāh b. Muḥammad Walī (d. 1256/1840 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 44; ‘Abd



Key
* = commented on al-Jurjānī; ** = commented on a commentary on al-Jurjānī
*** = commented directly on the *Mawāqif*; **** = commented on al-Harawī on al-Jurjānī on the *Mawāqif*
———— Immediate disciple

TREE 1 al-Harawī and earlier



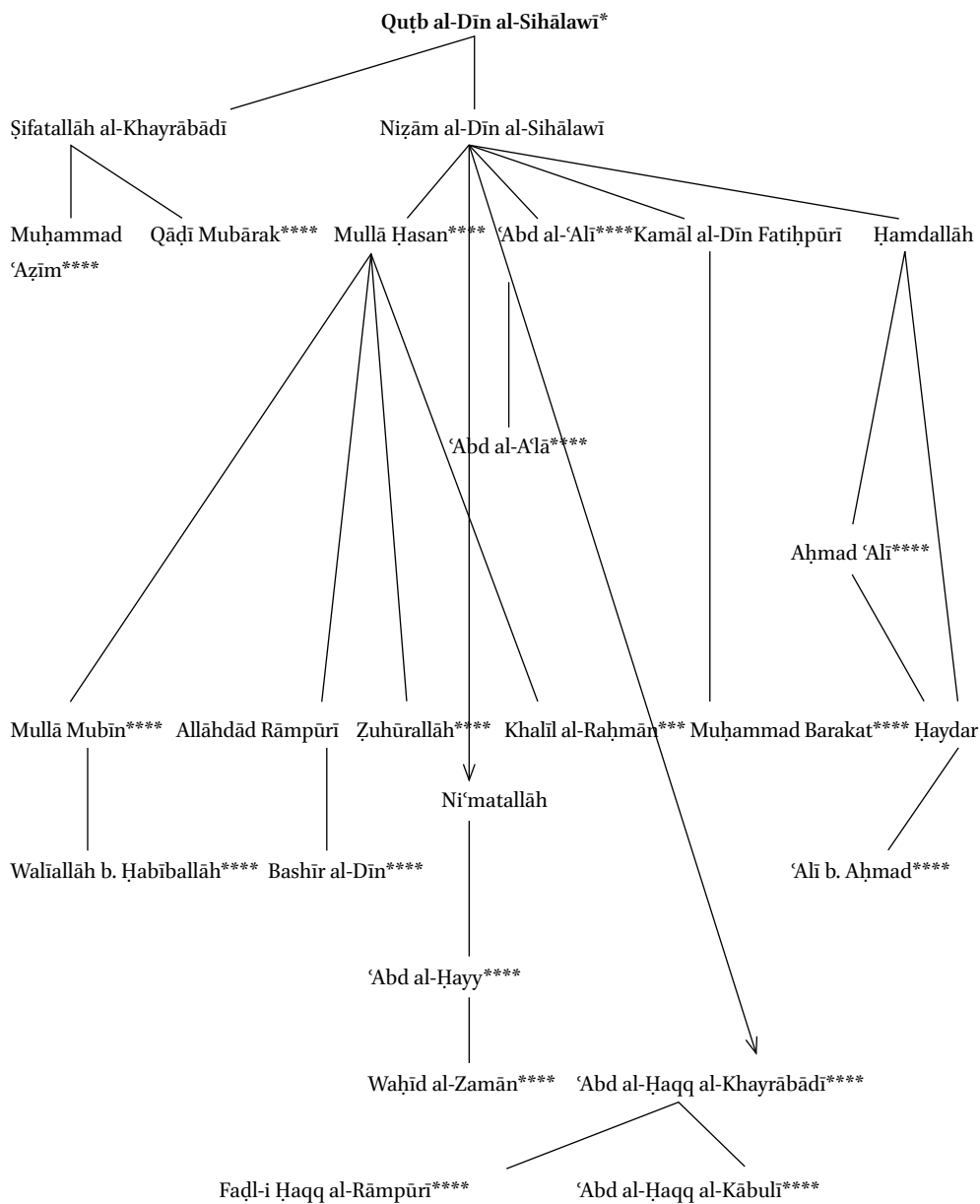
Key: **** = commented on al-Harawī on al-Jurjānī on the *Mawāqif*

———— Immediate disciple —————> few generations removed

TREE 2 al-Harawī's line

The details are somewhat sparse, but the synthesis offered above suggests that the layer of intellectual networks *across* the distinct lineages of the late eleventh/seventeenth centuries must have been thick; likewise, the fluidity of textual transmission and influence must have been loose. Otherwise, there is little that can explain how al-Harawī came to dominate the *Mawāqif* scene. I might add that the hypothesis of cross-network ties gains further strength from the fact that, in the context of South Asia, al-Harawī also became the major

al-'Alī b. Nizām al-Dīn (d. 1225/1810 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 47; Mullā Mubīn (d. 1225/1810 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 51; 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Khayrābādī (d. 1318/1900 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 67–69; 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Muḥammad A'zam al-Kābulī (d. 1321/1903 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 69; Faḍl-i Ḥaqq b. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Rāmpūrī (d. 1358/1939 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 76; Waḥīd al-Zamān b. Maṣīḥ al-Zamān (d. 1338/1920 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 83; Muḥammad Qā'im b. Shāh Mīr (fl. 12th/18th c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 28; Amīnallāh b. Salimallāh (d. 1233/1818 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 34; al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 7:96–97; Rafī' al-Dīn b. Shāh Walīallāh (d. 1233/1818 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 41; al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 7:204ff.; Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Shāh Walīallāh (d. 1239/1824 c.): Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghūr*, 47; al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzha*, 7:297ff. See Rāhī, *Tadhkira*, 234ff., regarding Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm's studies with al-Harawī.



Key: **** = commented on al-Harawī on al-Jurjānī on the *Mawāqif*

———— Immediate disciple —————> few generations removed

window into the *Risāla fi l-taṣawwur wa-l-taṣdīq* of al-Taḥṭānī (d. 766/1364) and the commentary of al-Dawānī on the *Tahdhīb al-manṭiq* of al-Taftāzānī (d. 791 or 793/1388 or 1390). His glosses on these two works and on al-Jurjānī on al-Ījī came to be referred to as the *zawāhid thalātha*, on which—if I may posit another hypothesis on the basis of repeated observation and passing reports—students seem to have been required to write superglosses.¹⁶ In other words, the influence of al-Harawī, who appears rather isolated from the dense network that grew out of Sihāla and Lucknow, must have been heavy via his and his lineage's direct and indirect association with a number of scholars.

If we are to posit this hypothesis of a thick eleventh/seventeenth century network, then the rest of the career of the *Mawāqif* in South Asia becomes rather self-explanatory. Every single one of the 22 superglosses on al-Harawī's gloss on al-Jurjānī is written either by a scholar associated with Quṭb al-Dīn al-Sihālawī's famous intellectual lineage of Farangī Maḥall or by someone falling directly under al-Harawī's legacy.¹⁷ And these superglosses are clearly a north Indian phenomenon, penned in cities such as Delhi, Lucknow, Rampur, Kolkata, Allahabad, Gūpāmaw, and Jawnpūr.

Thus, to sum up the observations, we may say that the bio-bibliographical information reveals that the engagement with al-Jurjānī was a product of developments in the late tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries. These developments were specific to the curricular orientations and reading practices of a diachronic series of scholarly networks that ultimately emptied into the scholarly family of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Sihālawī and the lineage of al-Harawī.¹⁸ The former family, known as the Farangī Maḥall, and its offshoots into the Khayrābādīs, largely sustained the study of the *Mawāqif* in India; scholars in al-Harawī's own line also sustained some interest in the text. Both subnetworks wrote on the work via the gloss of al-Harawī, two of whose other commentaries, as noted above, were also highly valuable in this milieu.

Now that it is reasonably established on the basis of a study of networks that the career of the *Mawāqif* (and to be precise, the *Mawāqif* via al-Jurjānī/al-Harawī) was a regional affair tied to the fortunes and curricular demands of certain scholarly networks, it would be suitable to turn to the other question I posed: what, in terms of the contents of al-Harawī's supergloss, made it appealing to this tradition in the first place?

16 See, for example, Rahi, *Tadhkira*, 237 *et passim*.

17 The only exception appears to be Muḥammad Qā'im b. Shāh Mīr (fl. 12th/18th c.), but it is worth noting that two of his students mentioned in the sources both also studied with Shāh Walīallāh, who falls within al-Harawī's network. See Tree 2 above.

18 Only four glosses on al-Harawī were written outside of the tight network of the Farangī Maḥall and Khayrābād. See Trees 2 and 3 above.

2 Preliminary Observations on the Gloss of al-Harawī and Its Indian Reception

The 22 superglosses on al-Harawī are all called *Ḥāshiyat Mīr Zāhid umūr ʿamma*. In other words, they are comments on the second *mawqif* that is devoted to the *metaphysica generalis*. Of the South Asian superglosses on this section that I have consulted, almost all take up the task through the fourth *maqṣad*, leaving out a significant part of the second *mawqif*. Thus the sections generally of interest to the South Asian glossators of al-Harawī were the introductory comments on what constitutes the *umūr ʿamma* and the introduction to the knowable types that are substrates of the *umūr ʿamma*. This is followed by an engagement with the four *maqāṣid* of the first *maṣṣad*, which is, broadly, a discussion of existence and non-existence: sequentially, the four *maqāṣid* take up the definition of existence, the question of the shared aspect and modulation of existence, whether existence is identical to or a part of essence, and mental existence. This leaves out about four-fifths of the *umūr ʿamma*.¹⁹

My readings of some of the glosses on al-Harawī indicate that the reason for the focus on these parts of his text has much to do with the threads that they allow to be picked up and to be redirected towards concerns of the living tradition of commenting and glossing on logic, which was *the* most highly engaged field among South Asian rationalist disciplines (*maʿqūlāt*). Within this field, the significance of the synthesis of Muḥibballāh al-Bihārī's *Sullam al-ʿulūm* cannot be overestimated. Bringing together a host of paradoxes internal to the project of Arabic logic, the lemmata of this text, reflecting a diachronic and synchronic set of technical debates, had forced its commentators to repeatedly tackle the issue of a broad category of non-actual subject terms of propositions. These subject terms could be products of mental operations, ranging from non-existents and conceptualized propositions to falsities and logical impossibilities.²⁰ In the simplest terms, the recurring consideration in the *Sullam* and its commentaries/glosses was whether paradox-generating items, picked out by subject terms in various ways, can be suitable objects of knowledge. Prime concepts to analyze with a view to this issue were the logically

19 See Dhanani, "*Al-Mawāqif*," for a broad overview of the contents of the work.

20 The *Sullam* was a culmination of entanglements with such concerns that had exercised earlier logicians writing in the Arabic tradition. What distinguishes it from earlier textbooks is that paradoxes that emerge out of the possibility of a broader range of conceptualized subject terms is a latent, regular, and defining feature of the work. For further on the *Sullam*, see Ahmed, "*Sullam*."

impossible and the non-existent that fell under a subject tag.²¹ And it is indeed discussions of these two concepts—and the possibility of such objects as objects of knowledge and as common notions—that quickly overwhelm the dialectics that emerge out of the mission statement of the second *mawqif* of al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī.²²

The second *Mawqif* is on common notions, i.e., that which is not specific to any [one] type among the types of existents, which [are limited to] the Necessary, substance (*jawhar*),²³ and accident. For it is either shared by the three types, such as existence and unity. For every existent, though it may be multiple, has a certain unity with respect to consideration (*bi-ʿtibār*). [Another example is] essence and individuation for one who holds that the Necessary has an essence distinct from Its existence and an individuation distinct from Its essence. Or [that which is not specific] is shared by two of [the three types of existents], such as the special possible (*al-ḥimkān al-khāṣṣ*), temporal generation (*al-ḥudūth*), necessity through another, multiplicity, and the fact of being an effect (*al-maʿlūliyya*). For all these are shared by substance and accident. Given this, non-existence (*al-ʿadam*), impossibility (*al-imtināʾ*), necessity in virtue of itself (*al-wujūb al-dhātī*), and eternity (*al-qidam*) are not among common notions. Investigation of these [latter] here is [simply] derivative. It may be said that the common notions embrace all notions (*al-maḥmūmāt bi-asrihā*) in an absolute manner, such as the common possible (*al-ḥimkān al-ʿamm*); [or they may embrace them] by way of opposition (*ʿalā sabīl al-taqābul*), in that [the common thing] and its opposite embrace all [notions]. A scholarly concern [would be] tied to each of these two opposites, such as existence and non-existence.²⁴

Al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī thus laid out two types of common notions: they either concern all three types of existents or only two of them. Alternatively, one might say that common notions are those that take within their ambit—either in an unqualified sense or along with their opposites—all notions. Thus, the common possible, i.e., that which is not impossible, and the existence/non-existence

21 The commentaries and glosses on the *Sullam* make several direct and indirect references to these same investigations found in the *Mawāqif*.

22 The text in bold is al-Ījī's *matn* and the remainder is al-Jurjānī's commentary.

23 On the equivocality of this term as substance and atom, see Dhanani, "Al-Mawāqif", 378f. For the purposes of this analysis, I translate *jawhar* as substance, as this interpretation would work just as well as atom in this context.

24 al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 2:59ff.

pair, would serve as respective examples. From this point on, the major bone of contention in al-Harawī’s reading would be whether, to what extent, and in which manner that which is excluded from the category of common notions is to be considered. If the initial presentation of common notions, viz., that which is shared by all or two of the categories of existents, is accepted, then discussions of impossibility and non-existence would be excluded *per se*. But they would indeed occupy a space in the text as elements in derivative discussions. On the other hand, if common notions are taken to apply to all notions, then impossibility would be excluded from the category, because no notion, as a given, is impossible as such; alternatively, if common notions relate to all notions insofar as one takes them and their opposites, then non-existence and, presumably, impossibility, would be included in the discussion.

Subsumed under the initial consideration of what common notions are is the fundamental question of the status of the non-existent and the impossible as objects of knowledge. This topic, which defines many of the features of arguments in South Asian *madrassa* logic texts—and especially the *Sullam*—and their commentaries/glosses, is precisely what is taken up in the aforementioned parts of the *Mawāqif* that were covered by South Asian glossators on al-Harawī.

Now al-Harawī’s gloss was itself key to unraveling this potential in al-Ījī/al-Jurjānī. I present it below, along with ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Khayrābādī’s gloss, as an example of the topical concerns I mentioned above.²⁵

His statement, **Every existent, etc.** This, i.e., the commentator’s statement that every existent has a certain unity even if it is multiple, is **by way of a gesture** and charitable [concession]. **For it is not necessary for common notions to obtain in all the instances of the three or of two [types of existents].** Rather it is sufficient that it should obtain in one of them. For unity is obtained in that which has unity, even though it does not obtain in that which has multiplicity. If you say that the commentator [i.e., al-Jurjānī] only claimed that each existent participates in unity and that that which is apparent from the discourse of the glossator [i.e., al-Harawī] is that non-existent instances do not participate in it, so that the charitable [gesture] does not exist, I say that the intention of the glossator is that it is not necessary for [each of] the existent instances of the three or two [types] to participate [in unity]. Rather, it is sufficient that some participate in it. He explained this [position by means of his observation] that instances are all the same in being instances. So if it were

25 al-Khayrābādī, *Sharḥ*, 6ff. The bold is al-Harawī’s text and the rest is al-Khayrābādī’s gloss.

necessary for [each of] the existent instances to participate [in unity], it would also be necessary for [each of the] non-existent instances to participate [in it]. However, this is not so. **Otherwise**, i.e., if it were necessary for all the instances of the three or two [types] to participate [in it], be they existent or non-existent, **possibility and that which is like it would be excluded** from [the category of] common notions. [This is so] **since there is no universal but that some of its instances are impossible**. He states in his gloss that **the explanation [of this last point] is that the Necessary, substance, and accidents all have some instances that are impossible**. [Examples are] **the participant with the Creator for the Necessary, the substance whose existence is in a substrate for substance and the accident whose existence is not in a substrate for accident**. **Thus is the case for each universal that is supposed to be free of that which is a concomitant of its essence.**²⁶

Al-Khayrābādī takes it as given that common notions need not extend over non-existent instances, in order to pass the test of being true of all or of two of the types of existents. With this projected position in place,²⁷ the question whether they must be true of all of the instances of the three or two types of existents is settled in the negative. Existent and non-existent instances, insofar as they are instances, are all the same. Thus if the requirement of being states of all instances of two or three of the categories of existents were true, then common notions would also have to be states of non-existent—indeed impossible—instances of the two or three types of existents. But this is not something that can be granted. Yet the argument presented here, especially the closing statement of al-Harawī that each universal that is taken to be free of that which its essence requires, opens up a familiar discussion of non-existent and imagined impossibilities that fall under the subject terms of propositions in the discipline of logic. And it is indeed this discussion that recurs as a dominant feature of the al-Harawī/al-Khayrābādī gloss from this point on.

The immediately preceding quotation primarily engaged the question of whether the common notions would have to be related to *all* the instances of the two or three categories of existents. This issue prompted a discussion of the status of impossible and non-existent supposed instances that may be said to fall under these categories; or put more generally, the focus of the discourse

²⁶ al-Khayrābādī, *Sharḥ*, 6–7.

²⁷ The position is not granted dogmatically, but is debated extensively by al-Khayrābādī with reference to the nature of the subject terms of propositions in his gloss on Ḥamdallāh on the *Sullam*. See Ahmed, *Palimpsests of Themselves*, Chapter 4 (forthcoming).

became the status of instances that are free of the concomitant requirements of the essence under which they are supposed to be subsumed. A set of possibilities emerge: (1) the non-existent and impossible instances are indeed instances of the universal and essence, but since common notions do not apply to them, they also do not apply to *all* the instances of the two or three categories of existents; (2) non-existent and impossible instances are not instances of the essence and universal under which they are supposed to fall, so that, in principle, one may still argue that common notions apply to all instances of the two or three categories of existents; (3) these types of instances are indeed instances of their essences and universals and common notions do apply to them, so that, in principle, they do apply to all instances of the two or three types of existents; or finally, (4) such instances are not instances of their universals and essences, but there is still no requirement that common notions apply to all instances of the two or three types of existents.

In considering these four possibilities, the more direct question that may be prompted by the concession of (4) is not addressed in any sustained manner. Al-Harawī/al-Khayrābādī are not invested in determining whether, given the exclusion of non-existent and impossible instances from consideration, common notions must apply to all existent and possible instances of the universal and essence. Instead, they are largely occupied by the intermediary question of whether non-existent and impossible supposed instances may in fact be taken to be instances of their essences and universals. In other words, the determination of whether *all* or *some* instances of the two or three types of existents must relate to common notions serves as a prompt for a sustained disquisition on the status of supposed instances in relation to the terms under which they may be supposed to fall.²⁸ Thus al-Khayrābādī continues with his gloss on al-Harawī:

The instance of the universal is that of which the universal is true with respect to the given [universal] itself (*fī naḥṣ al-amr*) in actuality (*bi-l-fiʿl*) or possibly. It is clear that the Necessary is not true of “the participant with the Creator” with respect to the given [Necessary] itself. Nor is substance [true] of the substance that exists in a substrate [with respect to the given substance itself]... So the aforementioned things [i.e., the participant with the Creator, etc.] are not instances of any one of the three [types of existents]. Thus if possibility is not truthfully applied to them, there is no harm in it. For anyone who claims that the common notions

28 On the function of lemmata as prompts for living philosophical disquisitions, see Ahmed, “Post-Classical”.

must be shared by all the instances of the three or two [types of existents] only claims that they are shared by that which is their instance with respect to the given thing itself ... [Next] if impossible instances of the three or two [types of existents] were [indeed] their instances, then [given] that possibility is also a universal, it would have impossible instances. And it would be allowed that the impossible instances of the three or two [types of existents] would also be impossible instances of existence and possibility.²⁹

The thrust of this discussion is quite familiar as a defining discursive feature of logic texts that were studied and commented in South Asia; indeed as noted above, a central and pervasive concern of the *Sullam*, namely, the status of the wide range of conceptualizations as instances of subject terms of propositions, is precisely what is at stake here. Al-Khayrābādī wishes to restrict the application of the common notions to those instances of the universal and essence of which these latter are said truthfully with respect to the given universal and essence themselves either in actuality or possibly. The absence of such a restriction would mean the population of universals with all sorts of—indeed a potentially infinite number of—supposed and mentally-considered objects. And this, in turn, would generate problems for syllogistics and would lead to internal paradoxes, as discussed in the logic texts.³⁰ It is no wonder then that, with the focus now firmly placed on the status of mentally-considered and supposed instances, quite a bit of the al-Harawī/al-Khayrābādī discussion keeps returning to the category of the non-existent and impossible that interlaces the assessment of a number of other related issues. As I mentioned earlier, the last chapter that interests al-Khayrābādī and the other glosses on al-Harawī from South Asia is on mental existence, a culminating choice that makes good sense in view of the foregoing observations.

3 Conclusions

This brief communication is a first foray into the career of the *Mawāqif* of al-Ījī in South Asia. Its conclusions, based on a study of the intellectual networks of

29 al-Khayrābādī, *Sharḥ*, 7.

30 See, for example, al-Bihārī, *Sullam*, 86ff., and the various and extensive commentaries and glosses on the lemmata here. See further the discussion in al-Khayrābādī, *Sharḥ*, 7ff., where some of the notorious problems associated with the allowance of mentally-considered instances are discussed.

South Asia and on readings of sample texts, reveal the following. First, interest in the *Mawāqif* seems to have been a function of the intellectual legacy of Shīrāzī scholars in the networks of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī and Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Dashtakī. Both directly and indirectly, the earliest scholar who commented on this text and who was also associated with this tradition in South Asia was Mīrzā Jān al-Shīrāzī. The works of this latter scholar were popularized in the teaching circles of South Asia by Faṭḥallāh al-Shīrāzī, who, like Mīrzā Jān, was a student of Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd. Mīrzā Jān's student, Mullā Muḥammad Yūsuf, was the teacher of Mīr Zāhid al-Harawī, whose gloss on al-Jurjānī's commentary on the *Mawāqif* became its only South Asian perspective. Within the Subcontinent, the commentarial engagement with this text was mainly an affair of the northern cities, perpetuated by the scholarly circles of Farangī Maḥall and the intellectual networks of al-Harawī himself. Indeed the curricular and socio-intellectual history tells us much about how this text sustained its stature in South Asia.

Finally, South Asian scholars were interested only in the first few chapters of al-Harawī's treatment of the *umūr ʿamma* of the *Mawāqif*. This observation finds explanation in al-Harawī's recurring attempts to bend al-Jurjānī's discussion in directions that were of pervasive interest to the study of logic in South Asia. The prompts in al-Harawī's work allowed those who commented upon it to explore the defining topics and problems found in the highly-popular discipline of logic, especially as it had materialized in the *Sullam al-ʿulūm* of Muḥibballāh al-Bihārī. Indeed several of the glossators on al-Harawī also wrote commentaries of some order on the *Sullam* and addressed precisely the same issues.³¹

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31 These include Qāḍī Mubārak, Muḥammad Barakat, Mullā Ḥasan, Muḥammad ʿAzīm, Muḥammad Qāʾim, ʿAbd al-ʿAlī, Mullā Mubīn, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Kābulī, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Khayrābādī, etc. See Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghīr*, *passim*.

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